

**The Challenges of Constructing  
a Non-Hegemonic Masculine Identity:  
A Study of isiZulu-Speaking Adolescent Boys.**

Andrew James Burnard

15 April 2008

*Submitted in partial requirement of the degree of Master of Arts (Counselling Psychology).*

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## DECLARATION

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts (Counselling Psychology). I declare that unless specifically indicated otherwise the following is the result of my own work.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Burnard', is written above a horizontal line.

Andrew James Burnard

15 April 2008

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to thank my supervisor, Prof. Graham Lindegger, for his time, for his interest in this study, and for his valued insights.



## ABSTRACT

Hegemonic masculinity (HM) is considered by many boys and men to be the "gold standard" of masculinity to which they are expected to conform (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). However, many boys feel that they fall short of this standard and are thus challenged to negotiate their sense of masculinity through positioning themselves in relation to masculine standards in various ways (Wetherell & Edley, 1999). This research therefore aims to explore the process of subject positioning in relation to HM and, if it occurs, the process of successfully aligning masculine identity with alternative (non-hegemonic) forms of masculinity. Eight late adolescent boys from rural KwaZulu-Natal were interviewed, and the data were qualitatively analysed by focussing on the boys' narratives used to describe masculinity and how they position themselves in relation to the various norms of masculinity. The results indicate that these boys did not show signs of having non-hegemonic masculinities. However, all boys reframed HM into a new discourse still based on the acceptance of the hegemonic domination over women and femininity (including less masculine boys), while disavowing practices relating to alcohol use, crime and risky sexual practices. This discourse represented a sanitised version of HM. It was suggested that boys maintain these multiple versions of masculinity in parallel, and use psychological splitting to maintain them. Soccer emerged as serving an important function for the creation and maintenance of these sanitised masculinities.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

The following are abbreviations that are used throughout the text which may require clarification:

HM: Hegemonic masculinity

TAI: Targeted AIDS Intervention Group (An organisation dedicated to promoting non-risky ways of being men through the medium of soccer. All the boys interviewed for this study were members of TAI at the time of the interviews).

## INTRODUCTION

Certain behaviours associated with hegemonic masculinity [HM] have been associated with increased health risk behaviours (Courtenay, 1998). HM was introduced by Connell to describe a form of masculinity characterised by the subjugation of alternative forms of gender (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). In particular, certain practices commonly associated with HM, such as risk-taking and a belief in having multiple sexual partners, put both men and women at increased risk for contracting HIV/AIDS (Lindegger & Durrheim, 2002). It can be argued that these risk-taking behaviours are underpinned by the social constructions of dominant forms of masculine-appropriate behaviour (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). For this reason, there is an urgent need to attempt to challenge certain aspects of HM, and replace them with less dangerous alternatives.

In order to understand masculinity it is first necessary to investigate how it is constructed. Recently, there has been a growing interest in the construction of adolescent masculinity (e.g. Wetherell & Edley, 1999). These authors have argued that masculinity is socially constructed in various versions or forms, of which HM is only one. This is not to say, however, that these masculinities are equally socially valued. HM is considered by many boys and men to be the "gold standard" of masculinity to which they are expected to conform (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). However, many boys feel that they fall short of this standard and are thus challenged to negotiate their sense of masculinity through positioning themselves in relation to masculine standards in various ways (Wetherell & Edley, 1999). In engaging with this process they are obligated to provide themselves and others with rationalisations as to why and how they are masculine (Frosh, Phoenix & Pattman, 2002). The means by which

they provide these reasons, and how they negotiate, substantiate, modify and maintain these reasons is the focus of the proposed research.

A greater understanding of these processes will yield insights into the healthier alternative possibilities of masculinity, and will be valuable in informing interventions aimed at changing risky masculine behaviours. A social constructionist framework will be used, because this framework can be used to understand the socially situated nature of identity, and well as to identity the individuals' subjective positioning in relation to social standards (Frosh & Saville-Young, 2006).

This thesis will form part of the SANPAD "Becoming a man in South Africa: exploring the multiple voices of masculinity amongst South African adolescent boys" study, which is currently running as a collaborative effort between the University of KwaZulu-Natal, the University of the Witwatersrand, and the Erasmus University of Rotterdam. The overall aim of this study will be to explore masculine identity and performance in late adolescent boys, especially in terms of the relevance for HIV/AIDS risk.

An investigation into the subjective processes of masculine identity construction is of applied and theoretical significance. Firstly, an understanding of this process will be useful in designing interventions aimed at reducing men's risky behaviours that put them at risk for HIV/AIDS (e.g. lack of condom use, having multiple sexual partners, the masculine dominance over women thereby reducing their capacity to protect themselves against infection). The results of this study will also be of interest and use to anyone involved in socialising adolescent boys, for example teachers, parents, or religious leaders.

Secondly, this study will advance the body of theory around the construction of masculinity. Past research has argued that masculinity is not fixed and biological, but is constructed socially in interpersonal relationships. Connell (1995), who first used the term HM to describe the popular set of norms governing masculine behaviour, assumed that the process of socialisation was one whereby boys either conformed or failed to conform to the hegemonic ideal. However, later research suggested that the process of identity formation, particularly gender identity, is multiple. This refers to the construction of multiple masculine identities in relation to a variety of social contexts (Wetherell & Edley, 1999). This conforms to other theories of identity, which argue that the self consists of multiple versions (Hermans, Kempen & van Loon, 1992).

The focus of many of these studies has been on the social construction of masculinity. This is arguably at the expense of studying the subjectivities of the social actors constructing and maintaining these masculine identities. Seidler (2006) has argued against the sociological view of masculinity theory, arguing that Connell's view of masculinity underemphasises the importance of male subjectivity in constructing male identities. Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman (2003) therefore designed a study of adolescent boys in London that asked the question how individual boys position their own sense of masculinity from the multiple and often contradictory cultural discourses available to them. Their study added the intrapsychic dimension to the interpersonal dimension prominent in social constructionism. Interestingly, these authors found that while HM is generally respected as a "gold standard" to be aspired to (as suggested by Connell, 1995), not many boys manage to reach this ideal. These boys struggled to give a rational account of their own masculinity in relation to HM. They realised that HM had certain failings (for them), yet were conflicted in deviating from hegemonic norms.

The Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman (2003) study was conducted in London which arguably has different versions of masculinity to those found in the South African context. Investigating how adolescent boys construct and maintain alternative forms of masculinity in this context is thus a worthwhile endeavour. This is especially true in the context of HIV/AIDS transmission, as HM has been argued to be the driving force behind the AIDS epidemic (Foreman, 1999; Lindegger & Durrheim, 2002).

This research therefore aims to explore the process of subject positioning in relation to HM and, if it occurs, the process of successfully aligning masculine identity with alternative forms of masculinity. A small sample of eight boys between the ages of 16 and 20 years old was used. The sample was drawn from a group of boys involved in the Targeted AIDS Intervention (TAI) Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO). This group is of interest as they have been exposed to interventions aimed at reducing HIV risk behaviours in boys and therefore may well have developed a sense of masculinity that is different to the mainstream in response to this intervention. The SANPAD study will sample boys from various other contexts, thus facilitating the collection of data representing a variety of masculinities.

This study assumes that masculinity is a fluid, relational social construct. Boys are at one time acculturated into a set of gender beliefs and practices, and also are active in negotiating and choosing between culturally available discourses (Edley & Wetherell, 1997). It is assumed that analysis of participants' narratives will give insights into a) the norms underlying the various masculinities, b) the psychological processes by which boys construct their gender identities.



Most importantly, it is hoped that the study will answer the question as to how boys could be socialised into a masculinity that does not include the numerous risk-taking norms and oppressive practices that are common in forms of HM (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

Under this general aim, there will be a number of specific objectives.

1. To identify boys' narratives of the dominant norms of masculine performance and their position in relation to these standards.
2. To identify alternative narratives or versions of masculinity which are not based on dominant hegemonic norms.
3. To identify narratives of how the latter are developed and maintained in such a way that still allows adolescent boys to have an adequate sense of masculinity.
4. To explore the implications for HIV/AIDS prevention.

These data will be further explored in the SANPAD study, where comparison of various groups will provide researchers with insight into any common features there may be between boys who successfully managed to construct and sustain an alternative version of masculinity.



## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Defining Masculinity.*

Since the 1980s, masculinity has grown as an area of research interest. This interest has developed out of a growing consciousness of masculinity as a changing phenomenon, arising in response to changing notions of femininity, and women moving into spaces previously considered the sole domain of men (Laberge & Albert, 1999). Masculinity studies was given more attention following a notable study of social inequality in Australian high schools (Carrigan, Connell and Lee, 1985), which introduced the notion that masculinity is not a stable, biologically based phenomenon (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Early research findings identified masculinity as being intricately tied to the concept of gender, including the power relationships and dynamics inherent in this field of study (Kimmel, 1987). Understandings of masculinity thus shifted from a biologically-based, sex-role theory to the view that masculinity consists of multiple hierarchies of socially-constructed discourses or narratives of masculine identity (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005).

It is within these hierarchies that masculinity is defined: "Masculinity is defined as a configuration of practice organized in relation to the structure of gender relations" (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 843). Masculinity refers less to the physical or behaviour characteristics of an individual, and more to a way of gendered relating between individuals in a system.

### *Multiple Masculinities*

Masculinity is inherently bound to sociocultural and historical context (Edley & Wetherell, 1997; Kimmel, 1987; Sideris, 2005). As such there is no one correct or true account of what masculinity is; it is more correct to talk of “masculinities” in the plural than to understand “masculinity” as a single system of beliefs or practice (Connell, 1995). In recent studies, Barker and Ricardo (2005) suggested that “there is no typical young man in sub-Saharan Africa” (p. 9). They identified masculinity as being socially-constructed, changeable over time and setting, and plural in nature. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) stress that the concept of masculinity is being used in a fundamentally erroneous way if it is understood as referring to an underlying essence; they emphasise that it is “desirable to eliminate any usage of HM as a fixed, transhistorical model” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 838).

Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) indicate that a significant criticism of the use of the concept of masculinity in the literature arises from its amorphous nature. What exactly is masculinity, if it is inherently plural and changing in nature? These authors argued that masculinity referred to a hierarchy of patterns of practice and beliefs in which certain forms were allowed to dominate over other forms. The generality and vagueness of the definition of masculinity itself is reflected in certain aspects of how masculinity is enacted. For example, the plural nature of masculinity means that hegemonic forms of masculinity are afforded a degree of “invisibility” (a thing not defined cannot be criticised) – and this can contribute to the ongoing power hegemony experienced in the gender hierarchy. Benwell (2003), in his analysis of popular media portrayals of masculinity, shows how oscillation between multiple masculinities allows a “negating or denying of what has just been marked or identified” (p. 149) – a position never definable therefore cannot be critically scrutinised.

Following the work of Connell and colleagues in the early 1980s, masculinities have come to be understood not only as multiple and socially-constructed, but also as existing in complex power hierarchies. Carrigan, Connell and Lee (1985) proposed a sociological account of masculinity which emphasised the power relations that exist between different social accounts of masculinity. Some accounts (or “narratives” or “discourses”) are more highly valued by members of a society and therefore have greater persuasive potential to influence and underpin men’s behaviour (or standards by which to evaluate their behaviour). Arising from this account was the much-cited concept “HM”, which is used to describe the forms of masculinity (argued to be present in all societies) that are afforded more prestige in power than other forms of masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

Masculinities are arranged in hierarchies – hegemonic forms are constructed in opposition to, and in competition with, subordinate forms of masculinity (Carrigan, Connell & Lee, 1985). In addition, masculinity is also constructed in opposition to femininity (Peterson, 1998). The role of “emphasized femininity” (or dominant expectations of behaviour for women – analogous to HM) in constructing masculinity needs to be emphasized: “Gender is always relational, and patterns of masculinity are socially defined in contradistinction from some model (whether real or imaginary) of femininity” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, 848). HM is therefore constructed both as the “gold standard” of expected masculine behaviour (Connell, 1995) and also as a list of prohibited behaviours and beliefs. As well as being expected *to be* tough, powerful and sexually virulent, for example, men are also expected *not to be* “feminine” or “gay”, and shun such behaviours such as expressing emotion, caring for children and engaging in health-promoting activities. Edley and

Wetherell (1997) suggest that masculinity is constructed relationally, and *negatively*. In other words, masculinity is defined by what it is *not*.

The relationship between masculinities in the proposed hierarchy is not as straightforward as may have been implied in the above explanation. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), in their recent review of the HM concept and literature, point to numerous study findings emphasising the complexity of interrelationships and dialogue that occur between masculinities in the hierarchy. Masculinities have a reciprocal influence on each other. By its very nature, HM is constructed in relation to subordinate masculinities and thus relies on the other forms by definition. Similarly, many subordinate masculinities assimilate certain hegemonic features and are themselves constructed as alternatives or reactions to HM (e.g. Bowleg, 2004; Torien & Durrheim, 2001).

#### *Masculinity as contested*

The hierarchy of masculinities is by no means fixed or constant. Forms of masculinity are in a constant state of redefinition and contestation. This has been effectively illustrated by a recent study of South African masculinities by Vincent (2006). Many emergent (and old) forms of masculinity, she argues, compete for ascendancy to power within the masculinity hierarchy. Current changes in masculinity are related to wider socioeconomic changes and reflect the changing political climate of South Africa.

In the current South African context, which remains even ten years after the end of apartheid a transitional context, various social institutions are involved in creating the conditions under which differing meanings of maleness compete for

ascendancy. Social institutions, school, university, sport, the media, and peers all provide young men with a range of resources with which to construct their masculinities. At the same time, some forms of masculinity are more socially powerful than others, not least because they are regarded as economically successful.

(Vincent, 2006, p. 364)

The above extract illustrates how the hierarchy of masculinities involves the inevitability of contestation for power between different gender narratives. This process is embedded in the socio-political context of transition characterising South Africa, and is mediated through the institutions that embody the masculine norms. For Vincent (2006), contestation and conflict among masculinity narratives is inevitable: she asks the rhetorical question as to whether discourses of masculinity are “destined to come to blows”. Similarly, but working in the context of the UK, Edley and Wetherell (1997) note that masculinities are “jockeying for position” in the gender hierarchy. Wetherell and Edley (1999) that contestation of masculinities is not only sociological. Individual boys often maintain multiple opposed versions of masculinity in parallel, even if this creates contradictions within their subjective experience.

### *Masculinity as a performance*

A common theme in the recent masculinity literature is the idea of masculinity as being enacted – masculinity as a performance. Masculinity is not a property of men that is conferred on the basis of biological sex; rather it is earned through a series of challenges that require public performances (e.g. Barker & Loewenstein, 1997; Connell & Messerschmidt,

2005; Edley & Wetherell, 1997). In many cultures this takes place in a formalised way through “coming of age” rituals. Edley and Wetherell (1997) suggest that masculinity is in a permanent state of crisis arising from the “contested nature of masculinity”. Arising from this is the notion of “doing” gender (Frosh, Phoenix & Pattman, 2002) or “identity work” (Brittan, 1989, p. 36). Gender identities are formed as a result of consciously (and unconsciously) incorporating and enacting a gendered position. Gender identity is thus not stable, but requires continual affirmation and re-validation through public performance. Being a man entails “taking up the project of HM” (Messerschmidt, 2000, p. 297, citing Connell, 1995).

Messerschmidt’s (2000) study of adolescent male perpetrators of sexual violence illustrates how an inability to enact masculinity (bodily, sexually, or otherwise) results in a “lack of masculine resources and accompanying negative masculine self-esteem” (p. 291). “To question or criticise male behaviour is to assert male social inferiority – whereby he is denied respect, and without respect there can be no masculine self-esteem” (p. 298).

Messerschmidt found that a failure to enact (or perform) masculinity in a socially acceptable way resulted in an expression of HM expectations (e.g. sexual prowess) through sexual violence.

### *Discourses of Masculinity.*

The above discussion has emphasised that masculinity is a difficult construct to clearly define – it is context bound, both spatially and temporally, and is therefore inherently multiple. Any description of masculinity will therefore necessarily be a temporary, contextualized account of an ever-changing phenomenon. For example, there are numerous



discourses that are considered to be HM. They may be comprised of different features across different contexts, but share the common element of using their socially-afforded power to marginalise other discourses (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). In addition, many researchers have described other narratives of masculinity that exist in various contexts. This section of the literature review is dedicated to these research findings: what are the various discourses or narratives of masculinity that have been described, and what are their key features?

It is important to note that these discourses are social constructions: as such they are not properties of individual men, but arise from social interactions. People are both the products and producers of discourses which are renegotiated in each interaction in every context (Edley & Wetherell, 1997). As Sedgwick (1995) points out, both men and woman alike are active producers (and consumers) of masculinity. To reemphasise Connell and Messerschmidt's (2005) assertion, emphasized femininity (and its enactment by women) reinforces and produces HM. The caveat here is that it is important not to reify or essentialize these discourses, nor to ascribe them as properties of individual men. Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman (2003) have in fact illustrated that individual gender identity is drawn from multiple social discourses, and the individual's subjective experience of them.

Men are left with the challenge of positioning themselves in relation to these socially constructed discourses of masculinity (Gergen, 1985, as cited in Edley & Wetherell, 1997). Discourses are thus socially-available resources that people can draw on in order to achieve certain goals, whether explicitly or implicitly about attaining power. For example, "Wetherell and Edley (1999) suggest we should understand hegemonic norms as defining a

subject position in discourse that is taken up strategically by men in particular circumstances” (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 841).

### *Hegemonic Masculinity*

Carrigan, Connell and Lee (1985) first used the term HM to describe the dominant discourse of expected masculine behaviour following a study in Australian schools. Since then, the concept of HM has been widely studied (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005) in a variety of contexts around the world (e.g. the UK: Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman, 2002; South America: Fragoso and Kashubeck, 2000; and South Africa: Lindegger and Durrheim, 2002; Vincent, 2006).

### *Defining Hegemony*

Although the specific nature of HM discourses varies by context, the defining aspect of HM is that it is the discourse with the most power and most influence over men’s behaviour. In other words, HM is not defined by a specific set of practices and beliefs, but rather how the discourse is valued in relation to other discourses. Femia (1981) ascribes the term “hegemony” to the work of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Italian philosopher, Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci argued that within the capitalist system, the middle-class maintained its power through “cultural hegemony” – a practice whereby the working class assimilated the values and ideologies of the middle classes. Femia (1981) describes how, through indoctrinating people into the values of a dominant discourse, the ideas of the more powerful group become “common sense”.



In terms of Edley and Wetherell's (1997) notion of the contested nature of masculinity, HM is that discourse which subordinates other narratives of masculinity (and gender in general). It is misleading however, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) inform us, to conceptualise HM as a coercive discourse that subordinates other narratives of gender through force.

Also well supported is the idea that the hierarchy of masculinities is a pattern of hegemony, not a pattern of simple domination based on force. Cultural consent, discursive centrality, institutionalization, and the marginalization or delegitimization of alternatives are widely documented features of socially dominant masculinities.

(Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 846)

Hegemony thus relies not on brute force to subjugate, but rather uses more subtle tactics to undermine the opposition and normalise the values of the dominant discourse. This can be seen in numerous practical instances, for example the study by Torien and Durrheim (2001) where supposedly "non-hegemonic" discourses of masculinity used the language of gender equality to create a new more disguised form of hegemony. In a similar study Benwell (2003) noted a strategic accommodation of feminist discourse in order to achieve a "new sexism" (p. 20) by subtly undermining feminist values. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), in the above quotation, are referring to the widespread institutionalization of HM values: To use an example from social psychology, South African university institutions are built around a white (Afrikaner) HM, where the values of "whiteness" and "maleness" are normalised and "blackness" and "femaleness" are Othered (Vincent, 2006). Vincent's research illustrates how young white men are given the right to be themselves in this environment, whereas young black men find themselves forced to adopt the norms of white HM in order to fit into the way of life in university residences.

### *Characteristics of Hegemonic Masculinity*

As stated above, the characteristics of hegemonic masculinities vary by time and context. In her study on South African masculinities, Vincent (2006, p. 363) writes: "In a country deeply divided by social boundaries of all kinds, including racial, class, ethnic, and rural-urban, the precise content of the norm or hegemonic form of masculinity changes vastly with context". Despite variation in masculinity due to context, however, there is enough similarity between the HM discourses to talk about a set of shared common characteristics.

#### Hegemonic Masculinity as a "Gold Standard"

The Australian gender scholar, Connell (1995), has used the term HM to describe the dominant norms of masculine practice, which become a point of reference for the socialization and behaviour of boys and men. These hegemonic standards, while they may not be realized by most boys and men are, nevertheless, perceived as the gold standards of masculine performance. "Hegemony works in part through the production of exemplars of masculinity (e.g. professional sports stars), symbols that have authority despite the fact that most men and boys do not fully live up to them" (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 846). In addition, HM reproduces itself through the pressure men (and society at large, institutional values, the media, portrayals of heterosexual relationships) place on other men to conform to these norms (Lindegger & Maxwell, 2005). This is a predominant characteristic of all hegemonic masculinities: they function as an idealized version of masculine performance against which all other masculinities are positioned.

## Hegemonic Masculinity as Relational

A related characteristic of HM is that it is constructed relationally. It has been argued (e.g. Peterson, 1998) that HM is constructed in relation to, and as a binary opposition to, femininity. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) argue that masculinity is a practice that exists in relation to other gender discourses. Masculinity exists as a response or reaction to changes in femininity (e.g. Kimmel and Kaufman, 1995). The rise of the feminist movement has led to reactionary changes of masculinity as an attempt to maintain the patriarchal gender hierarchy, and has also resulted in the so-called "crisis" in masculinity (Kimmel, 1987). More contemporary studies of changing masculinities show that masculinity does indeed change in relation to changing notions of femininity (e.g. Benwell, 2003; Haenfler, 2004; Torien and Durrheim, 2001). Torien and Durrheim (2001) have shown that the feminist discourse of the "new man", who is egalitarian, has put pressure on HM to adapt. The resultant discourse – the "real man" – is one that gives the impression of accommodating feminist discourse while subtly reinforcing hegemonic values.

As well as being constructed in relation to femininity, HM is also constructed in relation to other masculinities: racial and class differences often become salient points of difference and hierarchy (e.g. Vincent, 2006). The effect of other social variables on the construction of masculinity will be discussed in more detail later in this literature review.

## Discourses of Hegemonic Masculinity

A good general overview of the characteristics of HM is given by Haenfler (2004, p. 77): "*Hegemonic masculinity* is the most dominant, most valued expression of manhood

(Connell, 1987, 1995). It legitimates patriarchy and values competition, hierarchy, individualism, sexual prowess, physical toughness, rationality, emotional distance, dominance, aggression, and risk taking." Similarly, Brittan (1989, p. 182) presents the discourse of the "classical" man: "Classical man is the male chauvinist *par excellence* who believes that men and women are not only different, but unequal as well. He is rigidly heterosexual and blatantly homophobic." In addition, common to all discourses of HM is the emphasis on the role of the man as the provider (Barker & Loewenstein, 1997). Studies also suggest that body, in particular muscularity, is an important aspect of HM (McCreary, Saucier & Courtenay, 2005; Smolak, Murnen & Thompson, 2005) where more muscular men were considered to be more masculine. It is against these standards that all manhood is measured.

In the South African context Lindegger and Durrheim (2002) have identified a number of discourses common to all notions of HM. These discourses they relate to health risk behaviours found in men, especially in the context of HIV/AIDS<sup>1</sup>. These authors emphasised five universal discourses: 1) the "natural", uncontrollable, male sex drive; 2) the notion of conquest, or defeating or overcoming elements in the environment (often expressed as sexual conquering of women); 3) penetration – both literally in the form of sexual intercourse, and as a metaphor for interaction with the environment; 4) risk-taking; and 5) the theme of the idealised male body, which standardises heterosexual, white masculinity as the norm and anything other than that (such as femininity or black masculinities, c.f. Vincent, 2006) as being a deviation from the norm. Morrell (1998, as cited in Blackbeard & Lindegger, 2005) adds to this list the notion of power over women, the use of violent resistance, and compulsory heterosexuality.

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<sup>1</sup> The health risks related to hegemonic masculinity will be discussed in more detail later in this review.

Sexual behaviour is an additional aspect of manhood that is emphasised. Men are expected to be knowledgeable, experienced, and aggressive in terms of sex (Barker & Ricardo, 2005). Masculinity in sub-Saharan Africa places a strong emphasis on heterosexuality, and a denial, stigmatization and condemnation of homosexuality (Barker & Ricardo, 2005).

HM discourses, it has been stressed from the start, are not static entities but change to adapt to changing social conditions (e.g. Brandth & Haugen, 2005). Vincent (2006) writes about an emergent discourse of HM that is based less on physical prowess and muscularity, and more on intellectual ability and academic performance (such as one would expect in successful, middle-class managerial or business professionals). She calls this discourse "rational-intellectual masculinity" and defines it as being "constructed in contrast to versions of dominant masculinity which rely more on physical than on intellectual muscularity" (p. 359). Like more traditional versions of HM, this discourse emphasises strength, control, reliability and estrangement from the feminine; unlike traditional hegemonic discourses however, this is manifested in career success, effortless academic achievement, manners, self-confidence in verbal expression, and estrangement from physical labour (Vincent, 2006).

#### *Problems Associated with Hegemonic Masculinity*

The literature on men and masculinity has identified a number of aspects of masculinity which are typically associated with putting boys and men at greater risk of developing various illnesses and health-threatening conditions, for example HIV/AIDS and violence (e.g. Courtenay, 1998/2000/2003; Foreman, 1999; Lindegger & Durrheim, 2002).

Courtenay (2003), for example, has identified 17 separate studies that provide persuasive

evidence that HM is a mediating factor for developing health-related conditions. Courtenay (1998) stresses the importance of gender in health and well-being, and criticises previous health-determinant research for ignoring this significant variable (Courtenay, 2000). Being male, in itself, is a substantial health risk.

### Risky Sexual Practices

There is little doubt that hegemonic masculinities all share a component emphasising sexual prowess, often demonstrated through having multiple sexual partners and being sexually aggressive (Foreman, 1999; Lindegger & Durrheim, 2002). Courtenay (1998) reports that among college students in the USA men have an earlier age of initiation into sexual practice, are 2 ½ times more likely to have in excess of 10 sexual partners, and are more likely to have sex under the influence of alcohol or drugs than women. These practices put men and their partners at risk in a variety of ways, the most significant being a risk of contracting HIV. Foreman (1999) argues that men, in particular discourses of HM, are driving the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Bowleg (2004) argues that it is adherence to a HM ideology that perpetuates risky sexual practices. This relationship is teased out by Lindegger and Durrheim (2002). These authors indicate how underlying assumptions and expectations about HM provide men with an exemplar of masculinity that requires them to live up to these risk-taking standards. For example, the discourse of penetration (Lindegger & Durrheim, 2002) emphasises the importance of sexual penetration. Condoms, in light of this discourse, are a barrier to penetration and are therefore perceived as emasculating.

The negative attitude to condoms is well-represented in the literature (e.g. Courtenay, 1998). Only 1/3 to 1/2 of sexually active American college men use condoms (Vitellone, 2000). Vitellone (2000) cites the common theme in the literature that men function sexually according to an innate, "hydraulic" sex drive. Condoms, therefore, represent a break in the flow of a "natural" activity, and requires that woman take responsibility for their usage (as men are naturally irresponsible in this area). This effectively feminizes condom use, further increasing the reluctance on men to use them (Vitellone, 2000).

Sexual risks that HM perpetuates also relates to other aspects of sexuality. "In the domain of sexuality, traditional masculinity ideologies encourage men to be sexually assertive, be always ready to have sex, view sex primarily as pleasurable and recreational, perceive penetration as the goal of sex, control all aspects of sexual activity, and have multiple sex partners" (Bowleg, 2004, p. 169). Sexual assertion is problematic in that it facilitates sexual violence and limits the capacity of women to be in control of their sexuality, a problem that is of particular significance in South Africa (Van Niekerk, 2005). Women are positioned as passive recipients in terms of sexual exchanges with men; as such they have limited capacity to insist on condom use, or not to have sex (Lindegger and Durrheim, 2002). This poses a particular risk for HIV/AIDS, argue Lindegger & Durrheim (2002):

Discourses of risk-taking, conquest, penetration, and male sex drive operate together in male sexuality and the spread of HIV/AIDS. This may be illustrated with the contemporary South African myth that sex with young girls or virgins may be a cure for AIDS. AIDS, sexuality and masculinity are drawn together in a practice where men conquer and penetrate (virgin) territory, both spreading the virus and expressing their male sex drive.

(Lindegger & Durrheim, 2002, p. 12)



Given this research finding, it is not surprising that recent local studies have linked HM with the spread of HIV: in Namibia (Sorrell & Rafaelli, 2005) and locally (Lindegger & Durrheim, 2002). These authors argued strongly in favour of finding and promoting viable alternatives to HM that are not characterised by these risky sexual practices.

### Violence and Sexual Violence

Sexual violence by men on women, and other forms of violence, is a serious problem in which HM is implicated. The common themes in HM discourses around the male sex drive (Lindegger & Durrheim, 2002), and the subordinate role of women can lead to sexual violence against women. HM frames the biological sex drive as irrepressible, and women are expected to submit to it (Barker & Loewenstein, 1997; Lindegger & Durrheim, 2002). In light of this, a refusal by a woman to engage in sex with a man could be seen as a threat to his masculinity, or a violation of the natural order of things. In addition, being at the top of the gender hierarchy, HM by definition has more power than other gendered discourses, thus limiting the possibility of a woman refusing sex with a man, at the very least at the discursive level.

Petersen [1998] suggests that in these contexts the extreme ("violent and virulent") expectations of heterosexuality have led to the tolerance or even encouragement of sexual discrimination and harassment, prostitution and abuse of women, plus extreme intolerance of and persecution of homosexuality.

(Lindegger & Durrheim, 2002, p. 6).



Lindegger and Durrheim (2002) are suggesting in the that violence is inherent within the HM discourse. The ubiquity of these norms means that HM is reproduced and enacted across contexts and at all levels of society, from the individual level (e.g. abuse of women), to the macro-political level (e.g. para-military paradigms that influence the organising structure of society). Stoudt (2006) argues that "violence [is] embedded in and mediated through hegemonic masculine values" (p. 274), therefore restricting range of options available to boys, violence being one of the primary choices available.

There is a second pathway to sexual violence through HM, which entails a reaction to a "failure" to conform to hegemonic standards (e.g. Barker & Ricardo, 2005; Bowleg, 2004). Messerschmidt (2000) has described this pathway in his case studies of adolescent male sexual violence perpetrators. He suggests that masculinity is earned by men through performance – an assertion well supported in the masculinity literature (e.g. Edley & Wetherell, 1997) – and this poses men with a challenge they must overcome in order to be considered "proper men". Failure to conform to or attain the standards of masculinity with which boys are familiar can lead to boys attempting to reach these standards through other means, in some cases sexual violence (Messerschmidt, 2000). He argues that an inability to enact masculinity (bodily, sexually, or otherwise) results in a "lack of masculine resources and [an] accompanying negative masculine self-esteem" (p. 291).... "To question or criticise male behaviour is to assert male social inferiority – whereby he is denied respect, and without respect there can be no masculine self-esteem" (p. 298).

In a local study by Lindegger and Maxwell (2005), the authors found that playing and involvement in soccer created a pathway that legitimised men's enactment of the violence inherent in the HM discourse.

[S]occer stardom is seen as legitimating a variety of forms of sexual abuse of women, including multiple women as sexual partners, and that girls and women are especially likely to accept such abuses from soccer stars.

(Lindegger & Maxwell, 2005, p. 8)

Sexual violence affords an opportunity to attain hegemonic standards as it is underpinned by a) asserting the male sex drive, b) domination over women, c) the use of violence to solve problems. Messerschmidt's argument is that these features are often represented in HM. Most significantly, masculine violence is portrayed by HM discourses as being a socially acceptable means of standing up to a threat (Messerschmidt, 2000).

In addition to sexual violence, HM has also been associated with other forms of violence and domination, for example bullying at school (Stoudt, 2006). Hutton (2005) has argued how certain forms of criminal activity, often those involving violence, intimidation and risk, are organised around HM.

Studies in South African have indicated that problems around HM and violence are significant (e.g. Morrell, 2005). Morrell (2001, as cited in Blackbeard & Lindegger, 2006) reports on the problem of sexual violence in the school context, and violent gang cultures. Blackbeard (2005, cited in Blackbeard & Lindegger, 2006) relates HM to homophobic harassment and the objectification of women.

### Risk Taking

Men are far more likely than women to engage in behaviour that puts them at risk for endangering their health (Courtenay, 1998; 2000; 2003). Courtenay (1998) argues that there

is no biological explanation for women living longer than men (as in the 1920s women and men had equal longevity); the difference can be explained through behavioural differences between men and women. Men participate in risky sports, take risky employment, choose risky modes of travel, smoke more, drink more, and take drugs more when compared to women. Men are more likely to carry a weapon, and are more likely to become involved in a fight. They are more likely to drive dangerously: they commit far more traffic offences than women (Courtenay, 1998).

It could be argued that this behaviour is underpinned by the HM discourse that promotes the male body as invulnerable and idealized, the discourse around risk taking (Lindegger & Durrheim, 2002) and the discourse around masculinity and being in control (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

#### *Alternative Discourses of Masculinity*

The nature of the contested and hierarchical multiplicity of masculinities means that there are necessarily subordinated versions of masculinity that are not given as much social credibility as HM. This is despite the fact that most men do not live up to the standards set up by HM and in fact live out alternate versions, or even oppositions to HM (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Edley & Wetherell, 1997). Edley and Wetherell (1997) define these alternative masculinities as “counter-constructions” to HM; they are defined by their difference to HM.

Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) have commented on the survivability and durability of these discourses: existing and thriving in spite of, or perhaps because of, racial

marginalization, physical disability and class inequality. However, alternative discourses need not only arise as a result of a failure to reach the standards of HM, but may be a conscious objection to hegemonic values (e.g. Haenfler, 2004; Kimmel & Kaufman, 1995; Renold, 2004). This section of the literature review examines some of the alternative (or “subordinate”) versions of masculinity that are available to men in constructing their gender identity.

In response to feminist pressures, the 1980s saw the rise of the “new man” discourse, which emphasised relating to women in a more egalitarian manner, and the abandoning of outdated traditional male sex roles (Connell, 1995). There was then, and continues to be, a great deal of scepticism around the degree to which men embody this discourse. Brittan (1989) suggested that the new man does not exist outside the media, and is nothing more than an attempt to placate feminism.

In South Africa, constitutional and political changes have challenged men to adopt an alternative discourse of masculinity (Sideris, 2005). Sideris (2005) observes that often the challenges centre on a tension between the cultural values that emphasise the man as the head of the household, and the conflicting human rights values that promote gender equality and the sharing of domestic tasks.

There are also emergent masculinities that blur the heterosexual-homosexual boundaries. Popular media is being colonised by homosexual masculinities (for example, in the television series *Will and Grace*, and *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*). These programmes normalise homosexuality, and encourage heterosexual men to assimilate previously shunned values, such as learning to cook, colouring one’s hair, and other activities previously

associated with femininity. The emerging "metrosexual" identity envisages a man who is heterosexual, but values personal attention to appearance unlike traditional hegemonic men (Demetriou, 2001 as cited in Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

Owing to the risks associated with HM, alternative masculinities that espouse less dangerous behaviours are vitally important. Understanding how these alternatives are constructed and the means by which individuals successfully subscribe to them is vital for promoting the health of men and women alike. For this reason there has been a surge of interest in the construction of alternative forms of masculinity (e.g. Frosh, Phoenix & Pattman, 2002; Haenfler, 2004; McPhail, 2003; Renold, 2004; Swain, 2006). Research has identified a number of spaces in which alternative masculinities have been constructed.

Frosh, Phoenix & Pattman (2002) in particular, have explored the possibilities for emergent alternative masculinities. These authors investigated British boys' accounts of their masculine identities. A finding of core significance was how boys struggle to embrace alternative forms of masculinity while still maintaining their sense of masculine identity.

Swain (2006) has identified alternative masculinities in a group of 10 and 11 year old boys in the UK, who appear not to position themselves in relation to HM in any way – neither subscribing to it, nor distancing themselves from it. Swain (2006) calls this "personalized" masculinity which he argues arises from boys who appear happy to pursue their own identity without reference to dominant norms. Renold (2004) identified that boys in the UK might want to change their behaviour (which is informed by HM discourses) and recognise the harm it might cause, but are pains to do so because they lack an alternative discourse on how to be boys.

Tremblay and Turcotte (2005) have identified male survivors of sexual abuse as particularly susceptible to questioning the underlying gender hierarchy and constructing non-hegemonic alternatives of masculinity. For these individuals, there was a pressure to move beyond the values of HM that had resulted in harm. Similarly, Missildine, Parsons and Knight (2006), in their study of HIV positive men, observed that men struggled to form a masculine identity that was complementary to their ability to engage in safe sexual practices with their partners. These men resolved this tension by splitting off aspects of their sexuality from aspects of their emotional intimacy.

#### *Alternative Masculinities and the Reproduction of Hegemonic Masculinity*

Bowleg (2004) observes that alternative masculinities may in themselves be hegemonic. For example, black American masculinities were subjugated by white masculinities during the historical period of slavery, but nevertheless reinvented hegemonic values in relation to more subordinate forms of gender (i.e. homosexuals and women).

Denied access to this idealized masculinity initially via slavery and later through institutionalized racism, many Black men ... have constructed alternative expressions of masculinity. Theorists have asserted that these expressions are frequently characterized by sexual promiscuity, aggressiveness, violence, and thrill seeking (Franklin 1984; Majors and Billson 1992; Staples 1982; West 1993; White and Cones 1999), as well as the suppression of emotions other than anger, mistrust of authority, disdain for "feminine" qualities, pronounced heterosexuality, and denial of vulnerability (Harris 1995).

(Bowleg, 2004, p. 170)

The work of Torien and Durrheim (2001) suggests that this phenomenon of the reproduction of hegemony reflects the underlying tendency of people to seek power and, in the case of those already in power, to maintain that power. These authors analysed the masculinity discourses reflected in a popular men's magazine and identified how emergent discourses of masculinity functioned on one hand to appeal to feminist discourses and on the other to reinvent HM. Benwell (2003), who conducted a similar analysis, also concluded that emergent discourses of masculinity use strategic negotiation and accommodation of feminist discourses to achieve a "new sexism" – "sexism by subterfuge" (Benwell, 2003, p. 20). For Torien and Durrheim (2001) this discourse is the "real man" discourse, which portrays a superficial attempt at egalitarian attitudes towards women, but simultaneously undermines these attitudes to maintain and reproduce HM.

Benwell (2003) describes popular representations of masculinity as a tension between the traditional man (a version of manhood characterised by physicality, autonomy, emotional silence and violence) and a version of manhood that is self-deprecating, ironic, humorous, and anti-heroic. This oscillation between multiple masculinities affords men a certain "masculine invisibility", where a "negating or denying of what has just been marked or identified" becomes possible (Benwell, 2003, p. 149). A position that is never fixed, never completely definable, and refers to itself in a self-deprecating and ironic way, thus removes from itself the possibility of careful scrutiny or criticism.

A reframing, or other strategy, to create another version of HM must be distinguished from what constitutes a genuine alternative to HM. A true "counter-construction" would not reinvent hegemony, and would not subvert or subjugate other forms of gender.



It is clear from the relatively small amount of literature that alternative “counter-constructions” to HM are a relatively new area of masculinity research. Investigating boys’ subjective positioning in relation to masculinity narratives, and the strategies they use to maintain counter-hegemonic norms is thus an important phenomenon to study. The existence of alternative narratives of masculinity is well-established, but the strategies which men and boys employ in order to sustain them is less well explained.

### ***Theories of Gender Identity.***

Historically there have been a number of accounts of masculinity. These theories will be briefly reviewed to contextualise current thinking about gender and masculinity before addressing dialogical aspects of masculinity and the social-constructionist framework to be used for this study.

#### *Sex Role Theory, Psychoanalysis & Socialisation*

At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century psychoanalytic thinking dominated psychological understandings of how gender identity was formed (Canham, 2003). It views masculinity as essentialist and invariable (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). As such, there is only one way in which men are expected to behave – a sex role – and this is tied to biological sex.

Although there is debate about exactly how boys form this identity, be it through resolution of the Oedipal conflict (Frosh, Phoenix & Pattman, 2003), or through the difficult process of internalisation and identification suggested by the object relations theorists (Blackbeard & Lindegger, 2006), what is clear is that gender identity is seen as a natural, individual and



biological occurrence. This “proper” form of masculinity is reached through ideal socialisation processes (namely the resolution of the Oedipal complex). The degree to which a man takes on the appropriate heterosexual masculinity depends on his socialisation. Hence any variation found in masculinity is to do with deviation from the norm and is viewed as pathological. This can be seen in the early views of homosexuality as a sexual paraphilia (Bland, 1998) and the listing of homosexuality as a mental disorder in the first two editions of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manuals*. In 1927, for example, Ellis wrote about homosexuality as a “sexual inversion” which originates from the interaction of biological abnormalities and poor socialisation.

Despite its tendency towards biological determinism, psychoanalysis still has much to offer in understanding the processes of subjectivity that occur in identity formation (Frosh & Saville-Young, 2006). The psychoanalytic paradigm offers a depth-psychology perspective on the subject positions adopted by the individual. Psychoanalysis has long-held theories on gender development, such as Freud’s psychosexual development, or the Jungian *anima* and *animus* (Whitehead, 2002).

The socialisation theorists take a somewhat broader view of gender development. Although gender is still seen as a relatively static and biologically-fixed entity, it gives greater emphasis to the role of social processes in the formation of gender identity. Instead of a gender identity being acquired through interaction with primary caregivers, socialisation proposes the view that ongoing social interaction conditions children to behave in gendered ways (Coon, 2001).

Courtenay (2000, p. 1387) offers this criticism of innatist views of gender:

The sex role theory of socialisation, still commonly employed in analyses of gender, has been criticised for implying that gender represents "two fixed, static and mutually exclusive role containers" (Kimmel, 1986, p. 521) and for assuming that women and men have innate psychological needs for gender-stereotypic traits (Pleck, 1987). Sex role theory also fosters the notion of a singular female or male personality, a notion that has been effectively disputed, and obscures the various forms of femininity and masculinity that women and men can and do demonstrate (Connell, 1995).

### *Social Constructionism*

Social constructionism views gender as being constructed and re-constructed in an ongoing cycle of social interaction (Edley & Wetherell, 1997). The self and identity are constructed in social interaction, undergo reconstruction in different contexts, and in turn reflexively construct identities of others (Gergen, 1985, cited in Edley & Wetherell, 1997). Carrigan, Connell and Lee's (1985) account of masculinity (described previously in this literature review) draws on social constructionist notions. Gender is seen as multiple, fluid and imbedded in a sociocultural context. This view of gender shifts entirely away from biological sex or essentialist notions of masculinity; in fact, it is actively against them (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

Courtenay (2000) captures the essence of socially constructed gender in the following extract. He stresses the ongoing negotiation that constitutes gender constructions, the importance of relationships, and gives emphasis to the performative nature of masculinity.

Gender is not two static categories, but rather "a set of socially constructed relationships which are produced and reproduced through people's actions" (Gerson and Peiss, 1985, p. 327); it is constructed by dynamic, dialectic relationships (Connell, 1995). Gender is "something that one *does*, and does recurrently, in interaction with others" (West and Zimmerman, 1987, p. 140; italics theirs); it is achieved or demonstrated and is better understood as a verb than as a noun (Kaschak, 1992; Bohan, 1993; Crawford, 1995). Most importantly, gender does not reside in the person, but rather in social transactions defined as gendered (Bohan, 1993; Crawford, 1995). From this perspective, gender is viewed as a dynamic, social structure.

(Courtenay, 2000, p. 1387)

That gender is acted out – "something that one does" – is particularly important for masculinity. It highlights the pressure that is on boys and men to enact their masculinity, to prove it over and over again, and to be seen to *do* masculinity (Frosh, Phoenix & Pattman, 2002).

Courtenay (2000) also highlights the fact that gender does not reside within the individual. This can be seen as a total break from the sex role theories, which argue for an innatist, individualistic account. Foreman (1999) argues that men are driving the HIV crisis; however, it is not men *per se*, not necessarily male individuals themselves, but rather the *constructions* of masculinity that are problematic. Men are as much victims of HM as they are recipients of the social power it affords. Men are partly active in using these constructions for political purposes (Edley & Wetherell, 1997), but are also positioned by them, sometimes detrimentally (e.g. Courtenay, 2000; Frosh, Phoenix & Pattman, 2002;

Messerschmidt, 2000). The difficulties related to men positioning themselves in relation to HM are clearly emerging in recent research (Frosh et al., 2002).

In social constructionism, the role of narrative is fundamental. Brandth and Haugen (2005) argue that people use narratives to construct their social identities. The multiple narratives that are available in social discourse create multiple possibilities for boys and men to position themselves (Edley & Wetherell, 1997). Edley and Wetherell (1997) further argue that it is through these discursive and psychosocial practices that create narratives that boys are socialised into a masculine identity. However, they do not deny the agency that boys have in choosing a narrative to which they subscribe. Men and boys are active in both the creation and reproduction of narratives of masculinity, and are active in aligning themselves with a particular narrative (Edley & Wetherell, 1997). Boys are not passive recipients of, or subordinate to, social discourse as is often assumed in the social constructionist paradigm<sup>2</sup>. What is important, argue Edley and Wetherell (1997) is how boys are positioned by these narratives, and how they are active in using them for personal gain.

Renold (2004) indicates that boys are active agents in their subjective positioning in relation to masculinities. She argues that a person can be positioned in two ways: the first occurs when the self actively selects a masculinity with which to align (reflexive positioning). The second occurs when a person is positioned by others as being in one category or another (interactive positioning). The interaction of these two processes results in a complex and fluid masculine identity that is never static or complete, and opens the possibility of having multiple versions of masculinity in different spaces.

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<sup>2</sup> This is confirmed by parallel findings in studies on peer pressure: traditional thinking posited that peers exerted pressure on individuals who either fought it or succumbed to it. However, more recent thinking argues that while this may be partially true, children are active in selecting peer groups that have values consistent with their own beliefs, or desired identity (Schofield, Pattison, Hill & Borland, 2001).

An understanding of social constructionism is incomplete without some reference to the power dynamics that underlie social interactions. The notion of power re-emphasises Connell's (1995) hierarchy of masculinities and how narratives are not equally valued in social discourse.

### *Sites of Gender Construction*

Masculinity is created and recreated in a variety of settings. The above discussion on social constructionism has indicated that interpersonal relationships, organisations, and all aspects of the social world play a role in the construction of masculinity.

Research has given particular attention to the role of the school and schooling in masculinity construction (e.g. Carrigan, Connell & Lee, 1985; Epstein & Johnson, 1998; Frosh, Phoenix & Pattman, 2002; Lindegger & Attwell, 2000; Morrell, 2001; Stoudt, 2006; Swain, 2006). Haywood and Mac an Ghaill (2003) suggest the role of "schools as 'masculinity making devices'" (p. 79) which operate through practices like discipline and control, streaming and the prefect system. The formal and hidden curriculum, as well as teacher practices and peer networks operate to reproduce HM.

Sport is of particular importance in performing this function in South Africa. Rugby, for example, is an almost exclusively male activity that represents physical strength, aggression, and represents an historical tradition of White patriarchal masculinity (Nauright and Chandler, 1996). Because it is almost exclusively male and focuses on strength and violence, it acts as a form of policing that separates the men from the women and "cissies".

While rugby is the sport of choice for White HM, soccer is more widely representative of Black masculinities. Lindegger and Maxwell (2005) show how soccer functions as a site for the construction and reproduction of HM, including behaviours putting men and women at particular risk for HIV infection. While these behaviours put men at risk, they also afford men "masculine status and desirability" (Lindegger & Maxwell, 2005, p. 8).

### *The Policing of Masculinities*

Hegemonic masculinity is not a self-reproducing form.... To sustain a given pattern of hegemony requires the policing of men as well as the exclusion or discrediting of women.

(Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 844)

In the hierarchy of masculinities conflict as "jockeying for position" is inevitable (Edley & Wetherell, 1997). Holding a position on the top of the hierarchy as HM necessitates contesting competitors to remain at the top. Stoudt (2006) argues that because HM is not a "natural" or "stable" form of gender, it requires constant policing to continue.

Numerous studies have referred to boys, especially in the context of the school, policing the boundaries of masculinity (e.g. Stoudt, 2006). Policing of boundaries occurs in part through the curriculum and teacher interactions, but is mostly the prerogative of the schoolboys themselves.

These boys use representations of masculinity to discipline their peers' performances of masculinity. Variation on masculine performances is far greater

than variation in masculine representations, so then boys are bound to either fit or fail to fit in any given situation, which serves to perpetuate dichotomous, stable notions of masculinity (you're either masculine or not). The most striking evidence of this is that the disciplining of masculine boundaries among the boys seems more consistent than their actual performances of hegemonic masculinity.

(Stoudt, 2006, p. 279)

Masculinity is seen as dichotomous: "You're Either In or You're Out" (Stoudt, 2006). Even though the reality of masculine identity is that most boys do not subscribe fully to the norms of HM (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), the policing of masculinity ironically requires rigid adherence to HM standards through the "deligitimization of alternatives" (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 846). Boys are thus required to give the appearance of performing HM, even though they may not themselves agree with hegemonic values, or be unable to attain the standards required of HM. Lindegger and Maxwell, 2005) refer to this as the "culture of deception" (p. 9). Because of the polarised nature of masculinity and how it is policed (Stoudt, 2006), this poses boys with an apparently irresolvable problem.

Renold (2004) suggests that it is a lack of access to alternative narratives of masculinity that underlies this problem. The policing of masculinity frames boyhood as an either-or category, despite the plethora of masculinity narratives that are available and enacted by boys.

Lindegger & Maxwell (2005) highlight that men often see themselves as different to the norm prescribed by HM. The subjective struggles faced by men have increasingly become the focus of masculinity research (e.g. Frosh, Phoenix & Pattman, 2003; Lindegger & Maxwell, 2005; Renold, 2004). This expansion in theoretical focus originates with Seidler's



(2006) criticism of Connell's hierarchy of masculinities. Connell's (1995) theoretical framework understands men entirely in terms of their position in terms of hegemonic or subordinate masculinities within a power hierarchy. This minimizes men's lived experience and emotional life, which Seidler (2006) argues is essential to understand contemporary masculinities.

#### *Factors Linked to the Construction of Masculinities.*

Masculinity is defined relationally; it is constructed as an opposite to femininity and entails a denial and distancing from all things feminine (Edley & Wetherell, 1997). These authors suggest that masculinity is thus defined negatively ("masculinity is what I am not") and that Othering is thus central to masculinity construction. However, femininity is not the only opposition to HM: other factors such as race and socioeconomic status also create a sense of otherness through which masculinity is constructed. The challenge of masculine identity is not only to position oneself in relation to femininity, but also in relation to other men (Edley & Wetherell, 1997) as well as other races and cultures.

#### *Race*

Gender is about power – in South Africa in particular racial relations have also been characterised by marked differences in power. In a number of studies racial and gender identities have been shown to intersect (Epstein, 1997; Foreman, 1999; Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman, 2002).

Vincent (2006) presents a study of universities in South Africa and how the predominantly white “rational-intellectual masculinity<sup>3</sup>” excludes black men from university institutions. She argues that the legacy of Bantu education and Apartheid has privileged white masculinity over black masculinity, particularly in the university context.

In a society that promoted Afrikaaner nationalism in the HM discourse (which was white, puritan, and heterosexual) black masculinities would inevitably be marginalised or subordinated. Barker and Ricardo (2005) provide an account of the stigmatization of young African masculinities. Called the “young lions”, these young men were seen by those in the ANC as young men ready to use violence to overthrow the Apartheid regime. They were in a sense, an embodiment of the ideal young masculinity: brave, tough, strong and confident. However, their masculinity was subjugated by the dominant white masculinity, armed with the law, which constructed them as dangerous sexual predators.

Stoudt (2006) comments on a similar situation in the USA: the upper-class all-boys public schools were characterised by WASP (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant) values which “explicitly and implicitly teaches and reinforces hegemonic values and in doing so helps reproduce the cultural advantages given to economically privileged white males” (Stoudt, 2006, p. 275).

In an environment such as this, argues Vincent (2006), black men “occupy a curious dual space of hypersurveillance and invisibility” (p. 358) where they have to fight for recognition in the “white” spheres, where Black men are often observed to adopt highly noticeable modes of speech and dress in an effort to overcome the invisibility that they face in a white-

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<sup>3</sup> Discussed previously under *Discourses of Masculinity*

normative domain (Vincent, 2006). White men, on the other hand, argues Vincent, do not have to concern themselves with being noticed: as their masculinity is a privileged one, they have "the right to be unkempt" (p. 358).

### *Culture*

Sideris (2005), in her study of black men in rural South Africa, identifies culture as a significant means by which men define their identities. She identified that for many of the men she studied, culture represented a form of historical authority that legitimised their status and dominance as men. Often an appeal to culture or tradition was made to maintain patriarchal patterns of gender relations, where culture was used to defend male privilege.

### *Socioeconomic Status*

Expectations of men vary considerably by socioeconomic status. While the role of the provider is universal (Barker & Loewenstein, 1997), in the context of impoverishment that is common to sub-Saharan African countries, displays of wealth and financial independence take on a new meaning. Barker and Ricardo (2005) stressed the importance of the role of provision for a family: being financially independent and employed were important signs of masculinity. Because of the high rate of unemployment and poverty in sub-Saharan Africa, this was problematic for many men, who felt emasculated at being unable to provide for their families. Ironically, this emasculation was often manifested in criminal activity including domestic violence (Barker & Ricardo, 2005). Messerschmidt (2000) posited a similar relationship between perceived emasculation and domestic violence in the USA.

Maxwell and Lindegger (2005) posit that the relationships between men and women are greatly influenced by poverty, financial need and material desire. Desirable masculine traits in these contexts include the "Three Cs": cell phone, clothes and car (VSO "Engendering AIDS", 2003, cited in Lindegger & Maxwell, 2005). These possessions or qualities are indicative of the ability to provide financially, an important trait in an impoverished setting. These "sugar daddy" relationships are often detrimental to the health of women, both through immediate risk of contracting HIV, and by reinforcing and reproducing patriarchal hegemony.

In addition to race and socioeconomic status, there are other factors that have been linked to the construction of gender. Gender does not exist in isolation from other psychosocial and cultural factors that affect identity: for example social conditions such as war or conflict, rapid social transition, and sexuality are all significant elements in gender identity.

### *Social Transition*

The argument implied by Barker and Ricardo (2005) and Vincent (2006) is that times of social transition are associated with corresponding changes in conceptions of masculinity. The crisis in masculinity, so widely publicised in the 1980s, is indicative of changing social conditions (Lindegger & Durrheim, 2002; Kimmel, 1987; Peterson, 1998). Kimmel (1987) argues that the "crisis" in masculinity is no new phenomenon, but that historically masculinity has come into crisis on a number of occasions following widespread changes in social structure which challenged the existing roles and sites of masculinity. Sideris (2005), writing about rural men in South Africa, argues that in times of social change, where men's

former authority is called into question, men may draw on their cultural norms to escape subjective uncertainty about their masculine identities.

### *Violence and Conflict*

Barker and Ricardo (2005) and Messerschmidt (2000) propose a direct link between HM and violence. Men engage in violent activities in order to gain power, thus proving their masculinity. However, the converse may also be true: that violence and conflict are in themselves constructive of many versions of masculinity. Edley & Wetherell (1997) argue that men are both constructed by, and in turn construct, masculinities. Similarly, the way in which men, who perform violent acts, are ascribed to belonging to the group of "real men" constructs the ideal version of masculinity as including violent acts.

### *Sexuality*

An important discourse in HM is that of compulsory heterosexuality (Morrell, 1998, cited in Lindegger & Blackbeard, 2005) and sexual prowess. Sexuality is therefore an intractable component of masculinity (and gender in general). Messerschmidt (2000) argues that this connection cannot be disputed:

[T]he foundation on which men construct sexuality is gender: It is through our understanding of masculinity that we construct a sexuality, and it is through our sexuality we confirm a successful construction of our gender identity. Gender informs sexuality; sexuality confirms gender.

(Messerschmidt, 2000, p. 457)

As discussed above, masculinity needs to be proved through a performance of some kind. Men are therefore expected to prove themselves sexually. In many instances this is through advertising sexual “conquests” or by having multiple sexual partners (Foreman, 1999), which is problematic in the context of HIV/AIDS (Lindegger & Durrheim, 2002). For many men their first sexual encounter becomes a rite of passage into masculinity. In South Africa in KwaZulu-Natal, men with multiple sexual partners (*amasoka*) are considered to enact a key element of masculinity (Hunter, 2005). Conversely, in Soweto, a man who does not have many girlfriends, wants to achieve academically, does not commit crime or does not wear fashionable clothing (*isithipha* – a sissy) is belittled in the township culture (Walker, 2005).

### *The Body*

The masculinity literature has emphasised the “embodiment” of masculinity; that is the way in which HM represents and uses men’s bodies (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

Lindegger & Durrheim (2002), for example, have illustrated how the white male body has come to represent an idealised masculinity in South Africa. By defining the desirable traits of men, the HM discourse privileges certain kinds of bodies over others: it is here that race, gender, class and physical stature intersect.

Bodies are linked to social practices (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). For example, the performativity of HM requires that boys use their bodies to demonstrate their strength, sporting prowess, violence, and sexuality. Bodies are required to increase the agency of men; they act as a vehicle for performing masculinity (Messerschmidt, 2000). McCreary, Saucier and Courtenay (2005), for example, have shown that more muscular men are

considered to be more masculine. Similarly, the tallest and strongest boys at school have been shown to be the most popular with peers and teachers (Messerschmidt, 2000).

### *Multiple Masculinities: Dialogical Aspects of Masculine Narratives.*

The contextually-bound, hence multiple nature of masculinity has been discussed above, as has the hierarchical nature of masculinity. The dialogical theory of Hermans and Kempen (1993) emphasises the plural nature of self, and how it is possible for an individual to hold multiple versions of masculinity as his own.

The dialogical self is characterised by three elements: it is socially constructed; it consists of a number of independent voices, each capable of producing narratives; and these voices engage in dialogue with one another and others. However, the theory does not assume an equal power relationship between discourses. Just as multiple masculinities are characterised by power hierarchies, and hegemonic and subjugated discourses (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005) so are the voices of the dialogical self arranged in a power hierarchy. In this way the theory of dialogical self is a useful tool for understanding individual men's subjective experience of his own sense of masculinity, and identifying and explaining individual struggles to define a sense of masculine self.

### *The Self as Socially Constructed and Multiple*

Hermans and Kempen (1993) essentially propose a revision of the theory of self that is pervasive throughout Western psychological thinking. They argue against the notion of self



as centralized, unitary, and disembodied from context (the Cartesian self). Instead they propose that the self is decentralized and multifaceted. Theirs is a self that is socially-constructed in relation to others; accordingly identity is multiple, fluid, and context-dependent.

### *The Self as a "Multi-voiced" Narrative*

Drawing on the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, Hermans and Kempen (1993) propose that the self is not unified, but multi-voiced or "polyphonic". Bakhtin (as cited in Hermans and Kempen, 1993) conceptualised the polyphonic self as consisting of multiple independent points-of-view, or voices. He drew on the work of the Russian author, Dostoevsky, who introduced the literary form of the polyphonic novel: "The principal feature of this novel is that it is composed of a number of independent and mutually opposing viewpoints embodied by characters involved in dialogical relationships" (Hermans & Kempen, 1993, p. 40). Here the author of the novel is analogous to the self: in the traditional Western self (and novel form) the author is the sole creator and "voice" of the novel – all other opinions, ideas and perspectives are mediated and evaluated through the eyes of the author. In contrast, the polyphonic novel views the author as only a single point-of-view within a multiplicity of characters. The self, argues Bakhtin, is made up of a multiplicity of subject positions, each of which is capable of narrating a perspective. These voices engage in dialogue with each other, but are independent from each other.

The Dialogical self is primarily a narrative theory (Hermans, Kempen & van Loon, 1992). It views each voice as a "dialogical narrator" (p. 23) – the subjective self telling a story about the object self. William James (1890, cited in Hermans et al., 1992) called the subject

self the *I* and the object self the *Me*. James (1890/1918, cited in Westen, 1992) considered the *I* the "self-conscious flow of consciousness" and the *Me* the "contents of consciousness recognised to refer to oneself" (Westen, 1992, p. 10). Hence for every voice the self possesses: *I* tell a story about *Me*.

Combining the idea of the plural self with the notion of the self as a narrator, Hermans, Kempen and van Loon (1992) argue for the idea of the self as "polyphonic" where each *I* (or voice) – bound to a specific space, time and relationship – narrates a unique account of the self. This, as Hermans et al. (1992, p. 28) write, "permits one individual to live in a multiplicity of worlds, with each world having its own author telling a story relatively independent of the authors of the other worlds. Moreover, several authors may enter into dialogue with each other at times". Hermans et al. (1992) compare their theory of self to a story made up of a number of characters (all played by the same individual), each of which "has different stories to tell about experiences from its own stance. As different voices, these characters exchange information about their respective *Mes* and their worlds, resulting in a complex, narratively structured self" (p. 29).

Hermans, Rijks, and Kempen (1993) argue that many of the voices are not those originating in the self, but are internalised voices of significant others.

We may find ourselves speaking to the photograph of someone we miss, to a figure in a movie or dream, to our cat or dog, to our reflection in the mirror. Even when we appear outwardly silent, we may be talking with our mothers or fathers, opposing our critics, conversing with our gods, or questioning some personification of our conscience.

(Hermans, Rijks and Kempen, 1993, p. 213)

This aspect of the dialogical self is reminiscent of object relations theory, a derivative of psychoanalytic theory where the individual personality is seen to be made up of internalised objects of significant others (Summers, 1994).

### *The Self as Dialogical*

Bakhtin argues that dialogue is an inherent characteristic of human thought and interaction (Hermans & Kempen, 1993). Consciousness does not function as an independent, rational entity, but always involves a relationship with another consciousness, whether real or imagined. Because all thought is dialogical and necessitates the presence of the other, Hermans and Kempen (1993) argue that it is possible to understand the inner world of an individual as if it were an interpersonal relationship. Every word uttered in a dialogical relationship is "double voiced". "In the conversation with a real or imagined other, the word of the other is always present in the act of speaking and contributes to its form and content" (Hermans & Kempen, 1993, p. 42). In this sense, all thought is relational and is intended as a communication to another.

Dialogical theory conceives of each voice within the self as existing simultaneously within a certain mental "space". Hermans, Kempen and van Loon (1992) call this space the "imaginal landscape", which is a metaphor for the multiple voices within the self and the numerous possible perspectives they might have. In this way, the dialogical self is distinct from the traditional view of self:

In the polyphonic translation of the self there is not an overarching / organizing the constituents of the *Me*. Instead, the spatial character of the polyphonic novel leads

to the supposition of a *decentralized multiplicity of I positions* that function like relatively independent authors, telling their stories about their respective *Mes* as actors. The *I* moves, in an imaginal space, from one to the other position, from which different or even contrasting views of the world are possible.... In this highly open and dynamic conception of the self, transactional relationships between different *I* positions may lead to the emergence of meanings that are not given at one of the available positions.

(Hermans & Kempen, 1993, p. 47)

Following from this is that conflict between voices is inevitable, and that an individual may hold many contradictory beliefs which are linked to a certain perspective on the imaginal landscape. The spatialization of voices also implies a hierarchy of voices within the imaginal landscape. Certain voices may be equipped with more powerful narratives, and others may be subordinate to these. In the context of masculinity, for example, the same individual may conform and oppose HM. The different masculine "voices" could be separated by context or time, and may engage in varying degrees of dialogue. Well-dialogued voices would present as a seamless integration and awareness of these various facets of identity. Voices dialogued less well would present as conflict and ambivalence, or possibly even pervasive denial of the other voice amounting to psychological splitting.

### *The Dialogical Self and Masculinity*

The nature of masculinities and the nature of the dialogical self are very similar. Firstly, gender identity is a very important aspect of self. In addition, both masculinity and the dialogical self emphasise the socially constructed nature of identity, that construction is

ongoing, context-bound and therefore multiple. The role of narrative is also emphasised in both theories, as is the notion of interaction between narratives in the form of contestation or dialogue. Finally, I have argued that the hierarchy and multiplicity of masculinities described by Connell (1995) may be analogous to the processes that take place within the imaginal landscape between voices of the self. Burnard and Lindegger (2002) have previously applied the dialogical self to masculinity.

### *Challenges and Crises in Masculinity.*

In 1987 Kimmel wrote about a crisis in masculinity. He suggested that changing social conditions and challenges to patriarchy had questioned the validity of the long-held position of power of men. As discussed previously, the idea of crises in masculinity are common, and are linked to changing social conditions (Brandth & Haugen, 2005; Kimmel, 1987; Lindegger & Durrheim, 2002; Peterson, 1998; Vincent, 2006). Current crises can be seen as falling into two broad categories, the sociological and the psychological. Both are important for the present study, as its chief concern is identifying ways in which boys successfully resolve the crises in masculinity in order to construct a masculinity identity that does not ascribe to the dangerous values perpetuated by HM.

#### *A Sociological Crisis*

Being at the top of the gender hierarchy and therefore essentially normalised and unchallenged, masculinity was never really considered as a topic for study until it became a topic of feminist scrutiny and critique (Brittan, 1989). Brittan refers to the "Anomic Man",

an individual in crisis over his masculine identity and unsure of his role or position in society, arising from feminist criticisms of traditional masculine ideology. Seidler (1994) argues that a large portion of this crisis can be attributed to the radical feminist notion that masculinity is always wrong and femininity is always right. This has resulted in "a form of moralism that is not unknown in the culturally embedded idea that boys are 'bad'" (Seidler, 1994, p. 114).

While many factors have contributed to this current crisis, the momentum of the feminist movement and the decline of sites which are traditional bastions of masculinity have probably led to an increasing crisis of confidence or crisis of identity for men and masculinity.

(Lindegger & Durrheim, 2002, p. 8)

For example, men's role as the provider is, for some men, challenged by the entrance of women into the workplace and positions of economic power. The multiple and contradictory discourses that are available to men (for example, the new man, the metrosexual, the real man, etc.) furthermore complicate the issue, leaving men with unclear role definitions and uncertain of the expectations society has placed upon them. As Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) and others would argue, contestation over the meaning of masculinity is one of its defining features. The masculine invisibility defined by Benwell (2003) argues that the ambiguity of masculinity leaves men essentially invisible, adopting a number of contradictory positions, none of which they are able to claim as the "true masculinity".

### *A Psychological Crisis*

The effect of the sociological crisis in masculinity poses profound challenges for individual men, especially in the psychological domain. The crisis is related to the multiplicity of

masculine narratives: where and how do men position themselves in relation to these multiple discourses, and how do they deal with the conflict that inevitable arises from multiple, contradictory subject positions? Or, to frame in terms of Hermans and Kempen's (1993) dialogical self, how well the various voices of masculine identity engage in dialogue with one another?

While HM is set as the "gold standard" for men to aspire towards (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), there are a number of reasons why men might not aspire to these standards. They may be unable to meet them, first of all. Furthermore, pressure from feminist discourses promoting gender egalitarianism (e.g. Brittan, 1989), and from the health risks associated with hegemonic values, makes uncritical acceptance of HM problematic for many men (e.g. Frosh, Phoenix & Pattman, 2002). For Edley and Wetherell (1997) and Frosh et al. (2002), the most important challenges schoolboys face is maintaining non-conformity to hegemonic norms in the private realm, while giving the appearance of conformity in public. Their study showed boys' struggles to provide rationalisations in defence of their own sense of masculine identity, while nevertheless deviating from the gold standard of HM.

One of the major psychological crises in masculinity, therefore, arises from the conflict between the ideal masculinity and what is actually attainable. Foreman (1999, p. 19) argues that this causes psychological distress in individual men:

Masculinity is a very public trait, which on one hand offers power and privilege but on the other hand imposes a role model which not all men welcome. Indeed, many live in a conscious or subconscious fear that they do not live up to masculine ideals.



The psychological struggle revolves around the need for an alternative discourse, or cultural resource, which will enable men "to position themselves unproblematically from HM" (Edley & Wetherell, 1997, p. 19). Lindegger and Durrheim (2002) point out that the "counterside of the domination and privileging of masculinity is the psychologically costly struggle of men attempting to maintain or construct a new masculinity, and of the distress and conflict involved" (p. 10).

There is an irony in the psychological crisis between what is idealised and what is attainable, and that is that HM, while it is the gold standard, is reached by very few men. It is not normal, but normative (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). These authors illustrate this point by citing the study of Australian masculinities by Connell (1990), who pointed out that the "surfer dude" sporting hero, heralded as an "iron man", the embodiment of strength and sporting (and presumed sexual) prowess was ironically excluded from many HM activities by virtue of his sportsman status. He was not able to drink or engage in risky practices precisely because of the aspects that made him a successful sportsman. Through this example, these authors suggest that it is ironic that HM survives as it has so few men who really enact it. An argument put forth by Stoudt (2006) suggests that the survival of HM is due to the rigid policing of its boundaries, a task that is performed far more rigidly than the actual subscription to hegemonic norms.

Ironically, theoretical understandings of masculinity may in themselves serve to perpetuate the psychological crisis in masculinity. Seidler (2006) argues that Connell's *Masculinities* (1995), a seminal work on contemporary masculinity studies, places exclusive emphasis on the hegemonic or subordinate nature of masculinity discourses. This has unintentionally minimised men's lived experience and emotional lives, instead focusing on the political

implications of power relationships between gendered discourses. Men are thus viewed as representatives of a power hierarchy rather than as subjective beings.

Seidler (2006) argues that Connell's theory of masculinity implies an inherent "badness" in men due to their subscription to hegemonic norms of masculinity. It is assumed that because men have power, they cannot also suffer. This dichotomy also prevents men from creatively using their masculinity productively, and negates any positive contributions men make.

Seidler (2006) stresses that the hierarchy of masculinities has caused much suffering among men, forcing them to suppress their emotional lives.

Rather than exploring what it means to say that men lack an emotional language, Connell prefers to insist that men have power and privileges that should be more equally shared. His disdain for the 'therapeutic,' set in opposition to the 'political', makes it difficult to think creatively about the relationships of power and emotions"

(Seidler, 2006, p. 118)

Seidler (2006) argues that a more complete view of masculinity and men is needed to comprehend the struggles men face in coming to terms with developing and maintaining a sense of masculine identity. Both the political aspects of power, and men's subjective suffering – the "therapeutic" element of Connell's theory (Seidler, 2006) – need to be examined. Seidler's criticisms emphasises the need for a theoretical framework which considers subjectivity, such as the framework used by Edley and Wetherell (1997) or Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman (2002).

Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman (2002) have introduced a new element into the idea of the psychological crisis in masculinity. The schoolboys in their study faced the challenge of presenting the appearance of HM for their peers, while dis-identifying with its norms. The

core psychological challenge for these boys was around their sense of masculine identity. By simultaneously identifying and dis-identifying with the HM norms, these boys created psychological conflict within themselves. How boys and men are able to successfully find a subject position for themselves among the conflicting views of masculinity available to them is of key interest for this study.

A crisis unique to HIV positive men has been illustrated by Missildine, Parsons and Knight (2005). HIV positive men struggle to reconcile the dimensions of emotional intimacy and sexuality which, because of their HIV status, they are unable to link in a normal way. Their proposed resolution to this crisis is that these men employ psychological splitting to compartmentalise emotional intimacy and sexuality, thus saving their partners from risk of HIV.

A caveat in talking about "the crisis" in masculinity has been made by Brittan (1989) who points out that by proposing a single "crisis" in masculinity, one is assuming that all men are in crisis. Brittan's view is supported here because the focus of this project is the individual man's sense of masculinity and crises as he may or may not perceive them.

### ***Theoretical Framework: Social Constructionism and the Dialogical Self.***

The aim of the SANPAD-funded masculinity research is to investigate the way in which masculinity is performed by a variety of South African boys in the context of multiple and changing masculinities. The research is interested in identifying how boys and young men come to enact certain masculinities over others: what masculinity discourses are available to them in their social contexts, and how do they align themselves with one masculinity over

another, and in which contexts? The investigation of this issue is best suited to using a design that allows detailed investigation of boys' social and personal lives: a theoretical framework that achieves this is the social-constructionist framework with an emphasis on the subjective nature of masculinity (as used by Edley & Wetherell, 1997, and Frosh, Phoenix & Pattman, 2002)..

Previous studies have used psychoanalysis in combination with social constructionism to understand masculinity. Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman (2003) state the theoretical position thus: The social constructionist-theoretical framework assumes "no such thing as 'the individual', standing outside the social; however, there *is* an arena of personal subjectivity, even though it does not exist other than as already inscribed in the sociocultural domain" (Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman, 2003, p. 39). Frosh and Saville-Young (2006) argue that the contribution of psychoanalysis to social constructionism is in the enrichment of constructionist interpretations by analysing the person's unconscious motives and anxieties underlying an investment in a certain subject position.

In the context of this study, however, a number of factors prevent the successful use of the psychoanalytic paradigm. Firstly, psychoanalytic understandings draw heavily on autobiographical information (Frosh & Saville-Young, 2006), which is not available in the interview texts. Secondly, psychoanalytic interpretations rely heavily on relational experiences like transference between the interviewer and interviewee. As these interviews were conducted in isiZulu and then translated into English, a different person interviewed and analysed the texts making the interpretation of transference difficult. Finally, the translation from isiZulu into English necessarily involved a loss of many of the aspects of

the text (pauses, hesitancy, slips, etc.) that contribute to understanding a person's unconscious motives and feelings.

Instead of the psychoanalytic paradigm, the work of social constructionists such as Edley and Wetherell (1997), Renold (2004) and Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman (2002) will be used because of their attention to the subjectivities of their research participants, and their interest in how participants are active in positioning themselves in relation to certain discourses, and the subjective struggles they endure to do this. The theory of the dialogical self (Hermans and Kempen, 1993) will also be used extensively.

## METHODOLOGY

### *Aim and Rationale*

The rationale informing this research project has been discussed in the literature review. A summary of this rationale is presented here. Foreman (1999) and Lindegger and Durrheim (2002) have noted that masculinity, in particular the risk-taking and sexual behaviour norms characterising hegemonic masculinity, are driving the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Men who embrace the values embedded in hegemonic masculinity place themselves and their partners at risk for contracting the virus. However, not all men embrace hegemonic masculinity values. Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman (2002), for example, have identified that some boys develop alternative, counter-hegemonic forms of masculinity which do not involve risky sexual practices. However, it seems that creating non-hegemonic masculinities is a particular challenge for men, due to the extensive "policing" of what constitutes acceptable masculinity (Stoudt, 2006). Given that the hegemonic masculinity is a risk factor for men's and women's health (e.g. Courtenay, 2000; 2003), it follows that men who develop alternative masculine identities (and their partners) have a greater chance of living healthier lives. Therefore, it is important to understand how some men and boys are able to construct non-hegemonic masculine identities against the background of pressures to conform to hegemonic masculinity. This kind of study has not previously been done among a sample of isiZulu-speaking adolescent boys in KwaZulu-Natal – a region particularly affected by the HIV/AIDS crisis.

The specific aims include:

1. To identify boys' narratives of the dominant norms of masculine performance and their position in relation to these standards.
2. To identify alternative narratives or versions of masculinity which are not based on dominant hegemonic norms.
3. To identify narratives of how the latter are developed and maintained in such a way that still allows adolescent boys to have an adequate sense of masculinity.
4. To explore the implications for HIV/AIDS prevention.

This research project involves an analysis of the narratives that uncover the versions of masculinity enacted by these boys, and of the manner in which boys align themselves with certain masculinities to create a coherent sense of identity. This will include an attempt to identify boys' emerging masculine identities, including the multiplicity of masculinities available to them and their experience of negotiating amongst the plurality of potential positions.

The investigation of these issues is best suited to using a design that allows detailed investigation of boys' social and personal lives: a theoretical framework that achieves this is the social constructionist-dialogical framework.

### *Design*

The study design will involve the use of qualitative open-ended interviewing methods in order to investigate the lived experience of the participants. A major assumption of the social constructionist paradigm is that social reality (and individual experience) is created



Boys were invited by staff of TAI to voluntarily participate in the study at a soccer meeting in February 2006. Boys were at this stage informed of the purpose of the study and were offered R160 each to participate (R20 per meeting, plus transport). It was believed that this amount was fair compensation for their time and did not offer undue incentive to participate. Eight boys who volunteered were selected by the head of the TAI organisation. They were interviewed individually about a range of issues relating to their lives as young men. The small sample size was justified by the use of the qualitative paradigm, which aims for a depth understanding of issues and not universally generalisable results.

### *Procedure*

In late March 2006, boys were given a disposable camera and given two weeks to take a series of 20 photographs under the heading of "My life as a boy in South Africa". Nearly three weeks later on the 29<sup>th</sup> April 2006, they were interviewed by one of three interviewers (two women, one man; all black, isiZulu speakers). The interviews, conducted in isiZulu, focused on eliciting personal narratives about life as a boy, the difficulties involved, and the ideals that were held. To this end, the photographs were presented to the boy at the beginning of his interview and used as discussion pieces to invite a personal account of boyhood. The photographs ultimately did not form part of the analysis, but were used only as discussion pieces to facilitate the interview process. The interviews were open-ended conversations with being "boy-centred" of central importance. The interviews were recorded with the boys' permission using digital recorders.

These interviews were transcribed onto a word processor and translated from isiZulu into English. The translators were encouraged to include as much non-verbal meaning as

possible in their translations: this included recording pauses in speech, speed of talking, tone of voice and non-verbal utterances such as laughs and sighs. Of necessity a certain amount of verbal and non-verbal information was lost in translation. However, the translators attempted to retain the original meaning as closely as possible.

The translation of interviews had several implications for the results. Firstly, because they were conducted in isiZulu, the person who conducted the interviews was a different person to who analysed the interviews. This changed the nature of the interview process from an interpersonal one to a purely textual one, which placed limitations on the use of the psychoanalytic method (discussed previously under theoretical framework). Secondly, the translation of the interview texts arguably changed the meaning of the text, an important factor given that social constructionism places such emphasis on language in the construction of social reality. However, as the TAI sample was felt to be valuable in light of the possibility of exploring alternative masculinity discourses, so it was decided to use this sample despite the above limitations.

### ***Analysis***

The method of data analysis was closely modelled on the approach outlined by Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman (2003), but was adjusted to de-emphasise psychoanalysis and place more focus on multiple masculinities. The method of data analysis would have to capture the complexities of boys' descriptions of how they understood various version of masculinity, as well as identify how boys positioned themselves in relation to the various versions.

An analysis schedule was developed to answer the specific research questions of this project. Firstly, the analysis read for the dominant norms of masculinity that occurred in the narrative. These were further described in terms of how the participant identified with or opposed them, and how successful he was in his identification. This step in the analysis identified the dominant norms of masculinity and the participant's subjective positioning in relation to them.

Secondly, the interview was read for alternative discourses of masculinity and the features of these. As in the first reading, it was noted how the participant identified with or opposed these norms.

The third step in the analysis was to identify the means by which the participant maintained an acceptable sense of masculinity. These were psychological strategies that enabled participants to cope with the multiplicity of meaning and ambiguity inherent in masculinity discourses.

Throughout the analysis, and drawing from the work of Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman (2002) and Renold (2004), questions were asked relating to how boys position themselves in relation to the various masculine discourses available to them. The first question was aimed at discovering the conscious masculine position taken up by the participant. Following this, drawing on Renold's (2004) work, the question was asked as to in what ways the boys positioned themselves reflexively, and in what ways they were positioned interactively, by others. Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman (2002) suggest that boys may position themselves using socio-cultural or ideological resources, which highlights the importance of such variables as race, culture, social transitions, and economics in the analysis. Finally, drawing on the work

of Hermans and Kempen (1993), the interviews were read for evidence of multiple masculinities and, if present, examining the manner in which they were dialogued with one another in the construction of a coherent masculine self.

### ***Ethical considerations***

The research was conducted with cognisance of the rights and best interests of the participants, and research ethics guidelines. Participants were informed about all aspects of the study, including the aims and how the results would be reported. They gave informed consent to participate in the study and were advised on their rights to withdraw from the study at any stage of the study. Parental consent was given for those boys who were below the age of 18 years. Their confidentiality was protected by not using their names in the reports. Finally, due to the nature of the interviews, participants were placed at very low risk of being harmed in any way as a result of participation in the study. This is because the interviews were conducted sensitively by people known to the participants, with full recognition that the material may be of a sensitive nature to the participant. Should any problems have arisen, the boys' ongoing relationship with TAI staff would provide a forum for debriefing.

## RESULTS

In presenting these results, an analysis of each participant will be presented first, dealing with each of the main areas of investigation. Following that, the commonalities and differences between participants will be presented to provide a more global summary of the findings.

### *Analysis of KS.*

#### *Overview*

KS identifies a dominant form of masculinity based on many girlfriends, possessions, drinking, smoking and sex. This masculinity he perceives as pervasive and powerful, giving men the ability to roam and be free. While he implicitly admires aspects of this masculinity (especially the freedom and respect being male affords), he shows considerable ambivalence towards it. He explicitly sets himself up as different to this form of masculinity, arguing that the smoking, sex, he ascribes to masculinity puts one in danger of getting HIV and therefore not being successful in life. He argues that he has an alternative form of masculinity which is based on avoiding "the bad things" and striving for success (for example being able to buy a BMW). Soccer allows him the space in which to exercise this alternative form of masculinity. He is excused from engaging in drinking and partying because this might hurt his ability to play soccer:

KS: This is Coach Lindani. (photo number 11). He's the one who helps

us to make sure that we don't get involved in all kinds of bad things. He keeps us busy; he helps us to get our acts together.

(KS: 88-90)

However, his use of soccer as an excuse to not engage in "bad" things indicates that he accepts these hegemonic values and positions himself in the hegemonic camp. His alternative masculinity is a sanitised version of HM arising from the need to rid himself of the more risky aspects of masculinity.

He entertains at least two voices of masculinity: the hegemonic and the alternative. KS shows some ambivalence around some of the values of HM. He likes the idea of freedom and the ability to roam, yet also lists these as potentially dangerous:

KS: You'd find that someone when they are at home they are obedient because they have very strict rules at home. As soon as someone leaves home then they get all the freedom in the world and they start acting all crazy.

(KS: 292-295)

While KS maintains that there are significant differences between his masculinity and the masculinity of non-soccer players, his identity as a soccer player serves as a vehicle for him to enact many hegemonic values. His soccer identity also affords him with variants of the kinds of popularity and success that HM affords even though he does not roam. It is a reframing of a hegemonic value:

Int: KS, when we are talking about you personally, are you popular?

KS: What can I say; people know that I play soccer and that I can say

makes me popular.

(KS: 270-272)

### *Features of Hegemonic Masculinity*

KS describes the dominant form of masculinity as being enacted by boys who have many girlfriends, have frequent sex, are able to show off money, possessions and clothes, use substances, are free to roam around, are popular, and who have more respect than women.

### *Personal Positioning towards dominant masculinity*

KS feels that the dominant version of masculinity is more popular and powerful than his. It is a cause of significant ambivalence that he views his own masculinity as less popular with other boys and women.

KS: There are guys who think that they are better than other guys

Int: In what way?

KS: Because they roam the streets at night, they drink and they smoke and they have lots of girlfriends. They think that anyone who doesn't do the same and you go to school and soccer practice is a weakling and they look down on them.

(KS: 247-252)

He admires the freedom and respect HM affords, yet acknowledges the possible dangers involved in having too much freedom. One is left with the strong impression that if he were



not a soccer player, he would quite unproblematically embrace HM in its entirety. The above quote clearly illustrates the dominant views of those who do not subscribe to the hegemonic norm. KS ensures through his soccer that he is popular, and masculine, and is definitely not one of the boys who is a “weakling” to be looked down on.

### *Alternative masculinity*

KS does not show an alternative masculine identity. However, his version of HM is reframed to exclude certain risky aspects (drinking, smoking, having sex), and is presented by him as an alternative. He shows clear ambivalence about how he positions himself. The more sanitised masculinity KS creates has features of responsibility, forward thinking, and striving for success (which is symbolized by the attainment of a BMW). It is strongly embedded in the world of soccer.

It is opposed to HM in places, such as having respect for women, and avoiding the “bad things” of HM (drinking, sex, smoking and roaming). The following extract illustrates the core behind this creation of a sanitised HM: the very real fear of contracting HIV:

KS: My brothers should stop trying to always impress ladies. It's not like the olden days when you could do whatever to get into a lady's pants and there would be no problem. Nowadays there are risks involved. You could die for a woman. A lot of guys are doing drugs and it's killing them, alcohol as well and this hurts them....They drink alcohol and would sleep with someone knowing very well that that person is sick, and then they get HIV.

(KS: 275-287)

A key feature of this form of masculinity is that it is a struggle to maintain it. However, if KS does not sustain his sanitised masculinity, then he puts himself at risk for contracting HIV. However, this position is problematic for him in that he is challenged by peers to conform to hegemonic norms. The following extract indicates clearly that KS regularly enacts and identifies with hegemonic norms.

KS: That happens to all guys; it depends on who you hang out with.

Because you don't want to be different, you want to be like them.

If your friends have girlfriends and you don't it doesn't feel good. You wouldn't want to be the odd one out. Peer pressure does let us down.

(KS: 378-382)

### *Strategies for maintaining his masculinity*

#### *Soccer as a defence against risky masculinity*

Through playing soccer KS maintains a masculine identity that affords him the potential popularity and success he attributes to successful men. While this is a smaller space than HM (which allows freedom to "roam"), the soccer arena and the home are important spaces for him.

The success of his soccer masculinity can be attributed to how he reframes certain aspects of HM into more acceptable forms. This alternative masculinity is a personal reworking of HM values. For example, popularity is an important part of HM (attained through roaming) but

KS argues that he attains a similar popularity through playing soccer. Similarly, displays of wealth are important defining features of HM, but KS can also attain these through hard work or becoming a successful soccer player.

Despite the success of his alternative masculine identity, there are areas of ambivalence for him. These he deals with through the psychological mechanism of rationalization, for example, in the way he argues that he is popular despite not being a hegemonic man. He also shows a profound sense of ambivalence about how to construct drinking, sex and smoking. These behaviours appeal to him because he believes that most men do these things. However, his soccer playing provides him with a valid "excuse" as to why he does not have to do them:

KS: Like consuming huge quantities of alcohol in huge quantities and going to nightclubs and misbehaving. You can't go out partying the night before if you know that you have a match the following day.

(KS: 142-145)

### *Voices of masculinity*

Referring to the dialogical theory of Hermans, Kempen and van Loon (1992), KS seemed to speak in two distinct voices, each narrating a separate viewpoint.

The first is the voice of the Traditional Man, which supports many aspects of HM. This voice is related to his early understandings of gender differences and differences in status.

At times he appears to fondly recall and relive his unchallenged status and respect as a man – now referring to this as “confidence” (193-197). He also enjoys the deepness of his voice, which he associates with respect. He notes that a woman’s voice can never be as deep as a man’s (187-191). This draws attention to the perception of gender as fixed and biological.

The second voice is that of the soccer man, which is non-sexist, responsible and avoids “bad things”. This voice is narrated from the perspective of the home, soccer, and presumably TAI because it narrates many of the alternative values endorsed by this organisation. This voice is more closely related to the present, and has a future orientation.

These voices appear to be split off from each other, and located in their separate spaces. KS does not seem to dialogue these voices, as is evidenced by the apparent lack of awareness of the contradictory subject positions he occupies. Rather, he unproblematically holds both voices in parallel, indicating psychological splitting.

### *Analysis of DM – Two versions in conflict.*

#### *Overview*

DM has two clear versions of masculinity: the well-behaved boy, and the ladies’ man.

Initially, DM quite emphatically positions himself away from HM, suggesting that he avoids alcohol and drugs, as well as girlfriends. He coaches a soccer team, and encourages the boys

to avoid drugs. This alternative masculinity is based on soccer, going to church, setting goals for his life, and following his mother's advice about avoiding girlfriends.

However, it emerges later in the interview that DM has another version of masculinity. In this version some of the values of his apparent alternative masculinity are in fact reframed versions of HM values. He especially shows a considerable ambivalence about the issue of having girlfriends (723-731). For example, he says that having girlfriends is dangerous, but still has more than one. He rationalises this by arguing that he does not have many girlfriends, only two. Peer pressure also emerges an important element in DM having multiple girlfriends (1087-1093).

Towards the very end of the interview it emerges that DM was involved in drugs for an eight month period the year preceding the interview (2691-2692). This may explain his strong opposition to substance use.

#### *Features of hegemonic masculinity*

DM identifies a version of HM which is based on having many girlfriends, frequent sex, engaging in substance abuse with alcohol and drugs, engaging in criminal activities such as robbery, and having expensive clothes.

#### *Positioning in relation to hegemonic norms*

DM explicitly positions himself away from the HM norms of using alcohol and drugs, and engaging in criminal activities such as robbery. As with KS, DM distances himself from the

“bad” aspects of masculinity. For DM, this is to be a good role model to younger boys, recognising that sexual activity can lead to HIV infection. However, DM nonetheless positions himself in relation to the majority of hegemonic norms.

Int: Okay, has there ever been a time when you have felt that you were  
a real man. ....

DM: Maybe a gift from a girl or you sleep with her for the first time

Int: Oh, if you have never slept with her before?

DM: That is when you see yourself as a man that day because you have  
slept with her maybe it's for the first time for you too

(DM: 2175-2188)

He experiences profound ambivalence about the contradiction he is living out, on one hand promoting an alternative masculinity to other boys, and on the other having multiple girlfriends himself.

Int: So you should be a role model all the time. What is it that you  
can not do in front of them that could send a wrong message to  
them?

DM: Dating girls in front of them

Int: Is this bad?

DM: No it's not; it's just that well I don't know how I can explain  
this. It's good and bad. You are not supposed to be seen holding  
girls in front of people. You should be where there are not so  
many people where you can relax and be free.

(DM: 723-731)

On one hand, DM argues that girls are a distraction and sex should be avoided; on the other hand he does in fact currently have two girlfriends, one in Pietermaritzburg, and one at his school. His ambivalence is clear in the above extract. He employs several strategies to manage this ambivalence.

DM: The things I'm not supposed to do.

Int: Yes

DM: Like drugs, alcohol and girls with HIV. So rather have one girlfriend or two and not many.

(DM: 361-364)

DM rationalises having multiple girlfriends by comparing his ("bad") behaviour to the even worse behaviour of those who take drugs, or have sex with girls who have HIV. By implicitly suggesting that he *does not* have sex with girls who are HIV positive (but how would he know?) DM sanitises his version of HM, giving it the appearance of being risk free, while still being just as risky. In this way, he benefits from holding both versions of masculinity because they offer him the (false) reassurance of not being at risk of contracting HIV, while being able to live life as a "real" man.

#### *Features of alternative masculinity*

While DM does not have an alternative masculinity, he does subscribe to certain features of masculinity which make his HM less risky. DM is a soccer player, which in many ways defines his sense of masculinity. He spends a considerable amount of time training for, playing and coaching soccer, which provides a space in which it becomes possible to sustain his sanitised version of HM.



The key features involve being a positive role model, particularly to the younger boys to whom he coaches soccer. Two related features of his alternative masculinity are avoiding drug and alcohol use, and avoiding girlfriends and sex. Girls are viewed as a distraction from soccer and success and as a potential danger in terms of HIV/AIDS. Relationships should be based on mutual respect and trust, rather than sex (1710-1713). DM's moral injunction stands in clear contradiction to his having girlfriends, and represents a strategy he employs to rationalise his behaviour to fit with his claims at being a non-hegemonic man.

Being able to look after a family is another important feature. The following quote illustrates a clear shift away from the hegemonic norm of patriarchy, and embraces men and women as sharing equal responsibility for a household.

Int: Okay if there is someone sick should men also help by looking  
after the sick person?

DM: Yes they should both men and women are now equal. Yes they should  
look after the sick person this should not be a women's job only  
to look after people.

(DM: 652-656)

### *Positioning in relation to alternative norms*

DM's positioning in relation to his alternative norms of masculinity can be seen as the result of tension between two opposing voices of masculinity: the first, which forms the basis of his alternative, originates with his mother's (and now TAI's) influence on him to be a well-behaved boy. The second voice is linked to his peers and his perception of HM.

DM experiences considerable difficulty in aligning himself with certain features of this alternative masculinity, namely the avoidance of girlfriends and sex, and having a trusting relationship. At times he positions himself alongside the hegemonic norms, and at other times he is more invested in his sanitised version of masculinity. Peer pressure is a significant factor in his need to appear to be a hegemonic man.

DM: Yes they do and if you have only one girlfriend they will laugh  
at you. If you don't even have one it's worse

(DM: 1087-1088)

The second factor is DM's perception of the dominance of the hegemonic norms around girlfriends. DM believes that he is not in a position to justify his decision to have only one girlfriend to his peers. Any alternative versions of masculinity are subjugated to HM.

### *Strategies for maintaining his masculinity*

As mentioned above, DM experiences a profound sense of ambivalence and subjective conflict between his need to be a hegemonic man, and his desire to enact safer versions of masculinity. He has a number of strategies for dealing with this ambivalence.

### *Locating safe spaces / Soccer as defensive*

DM's most clear strategy for sustaining his alternative masculinity is to locate it in a separate space to HM. DM has structured his lifestyle so that activities relating to soccer and

school take up most of his time. By and large, these are spaces in which he can maintain his alternative masculinity without challenges from other boys.

Soccer provides protection against some negative influences of HM. DM quite literally removes himself from the spaces of the taverns where fighting and drinking occur. He enacts his alternative masculinity, the well-behaved role-model, at home, with friends, or playing soccer:

Int: How do people see a role model?

DM: They see him/her as someone who is well behaved, always doing right things how do I explain this. Maybe as you talked about drugs, that person does not use them, does not drink alcohol. And is a very strict person and do not do bad thing.

Int: Ok, you do not find this person where they are fights?

DM: Yes you do not find this person there and in taverns. You find him with friends or at home laughing and playing soccer

(DM: 1490-1497)

When DM is confronted with a situation that challenges his ability to maintain his alternative masculinity, he also withdraws into a safe space. While he is against having multiple girlfriends, he in fact has two girlfriends. In order to sustain his alternative norm, he attempts to locate his hegemonic behaviour in a different space:

DM: People ... back home know me as a

well behaved boy and not someone who likes girls; I do no want to mess up my record.

(DM: 737-739)

If he is able to prevent these people from seeing him with girls, then he will still be mirrored by them as the well-behaved boy and thus successfully maintain his alternative masculinity.

#### Drawing collective support

DM occasionally draws on the shared beliefs of some of his friends in maintaining his deviation from hegemonic norms. Peer support is a very important factor for DM: as seen above he is very capable of being swayed by peer pressure. However, he is able to tolerate the rejection of the hegemonic groups because he has his own group from whom he can draw strength.

DM: It happens because they think we belong to a different group and they think they are better than us. We also think the same way about them.

(DM: 569-571)

#### Reframing hegemonic masculinity into a more acceptable alternative

DM rationalises his adherence to the hegemonic norm around having multiple girlfriends by reframing (or rationalising) it into a more acceptable form. He suggests that he does not behave in a way similar to the hegemonic boys who have multiple partners because he *limits* the number of partners he has. Because he consciously limits his number of girlfriends (361-364), unlike the hegemonic boys, his behaviour is different to theirs.

### *Voices present in interview*

It is clear that during the interview DM spoke in at least two distinct voices. These are the voice of the well-behaved boy, and the voice of hegemonic self.

The first voice endorses the values and behaviour of DM's sanitised masculinity. The origin of the voice seems to be his mother, who is an important figure in his life:

DM: (laughs) I love my mom because she is open and tells me about most things. She advises me on most things and supports me.... She warns me about such things and advises about things happening around us these days.

Int: Like what?

DM: That I should not have many girlfriends because of HIV/AIDS that is infecting so many people today.

(DM: 370-386)

This voice is also the voice of TAI, the organisation which promotes healthier masculinity to boys. This voice is a powerful force in his identity construction.

The second voice is one that endorses HM behaviours, particularly around having multiple girlfriends. This voice is apparent in the following extract. DM is speaking from the perspective of endorsing and sharing his friend's values about having multiple girlfriends.

DM: Yes I do he is my friend and we share each others secret we do not hide anything from each other

Int: Okay you said you also talk about girls? / DM: Yes

Int: What is it that you mostly talk about when you talk about girls?

DM: He loves girls and in most cases he will be the one doing the  
talking and I will be listening. He loves girls.

Int: Does he have many girlfriends?

DM: Yes he does

(DM: 1679-1688)

The hegemonic man makes fewer appearances in the interview than the well-behaved boy. It is located in the spaces of hegemonic friends, but notably away from the auspices of his mother, his community, and the boys for whom he is a role-model. He does not want to be seen to have any hegemonic tendencies, except in those instances where pressure from hegemonic friends causes him to act in a certain way. It is likely that DM considered the interviewer to want to hear things said by this voice more than the hegemonic voice, because the interviewer was from TAI, and explicitly encouraged alternative values.

### *Dialogue and ambivalence*

DM shows clear evidence of ambivalence in his sense of masculinity, arising from a clear tension between his two voices. These voices are at times seen in dialogue which, because DM is unsuccessful in reaching a compromise position between the two voices, gives rise to subjective ambivalence. In the following extract the voices in dialogue are clearly evident:

DM: I do not think it's a good idea to have two girlfriends it's  
better to have one though it's also better to have two  
girlfriends.

(DM: 1061-1063)

However, often DM separates these voices into separate spaces, essentially splitting the voices off from each other. As a result, the two voices remain able to narrate perspectives and maintain DM's sense of alternative masculinity. In most spaces, DM is the well-behaved boy, but he is able to split off certain aspects of his behaviour that belong to HM, and keep these in smaller spaces. If he is able to separate his girlfriends from those spaces in which he enacts his alternative masculinity, then he is able to maintain a cohesive sense of masculine identity.

### ***Analysis of MD – A patriarchal man.***

#### *Overview*

MD is clear on his masculine identity, which he situates squarely with his father in the hegemonic camp. It is constructed in clear opposition to femininity, and is patriarchal. He recognises only one legitimate version of masculinity, and feminises others.

The main features of his masculinity are provision, protection, soccer, and superiority over women. Drinking and smoking are seen as negative aspects of masculinity because they affect one's ability to effectively lead and provide for children. In a similar way to KS and DM, MD is avoiding "bad" or risky aspects of HM and holds a sanitised version of HM.

#### *Features of hegemonic masculinity*

Provision, leadership and protection are core features of MD's version of HM. It is strongly patriarchal and delineated clear masculine and feminine roles and identities. It is important



for men to have a girlfriend as a means by which he may one day have a family to provide for. His father embodies this form of masculinity:

MD: This picture is number six, this is my father. I like the way  
he nurtured us when we were young as we were growing up and  
even now. I wish I will able to do the same to my children. He  
has raised us well never did anything wrong.

(MD: 47-50)

MD draws on the innatist, biological view of gender and sees men as natural leaders who are responsible for the welfare of others. It is their role to educate and give good advice:

MD: It is different, as a guy you are able to manage stress and  
handle big troubles than ladies. Guys usually take these as  
something that will make you grow stronger. But girls easily  
cry when faced with big problems.

(MD: 326-329)

Soccer is an important feature of masculinity which gives players respectability among the community. Soccer also serves a defensive function for MD in that by playing soccer he is able to sustain his sanitised version of masculinity and avoid involvement in the "bad" aspects of masculinity:

MD: It's important to play soccer when you are young because there  
must be something, sports wise, that you have your focus on and  
prevents you from doing wrong things in the community. Even if

you find yourself in trouble, the community even says that this person does not do such things in the community. Even if you some people are troubling you, they say NO, we know that boy; he does not do those things.

(MD: 220-226)

*Positioning in relation to hegemonic masculinity*

MD situates himself firmly within this hegemonic version of masculinity. He does not recognise other viable ways of being masculine, and feminises other possible alternative versions of masculinity, for example boys who associate with girls.

MD: Those guys who like netball do not come across as real men and even the way they behave is like they are ladies. We tell ourselves that their feelings are feminine, and they become a certain type of man because they even spend a lot of time with girls.

(MD: 480-484)

He successfully identifies himself with all the core features of HM. MD appears to have one voice of masculinity, which is allied with his father and his version of HM. He does not recognise in himself or others any alternative forms or significant variations on the hegemonic theme.

## *Analysis of PG – The struggle to provide for a family.*

### *Overview*

PG's masculine identity is based on explicit opposition to HM, and aims to avoid the "bad" aspects of normal masculinity. This alternative is based on working hard and becoming educated so that he can get a good job and support his family. He recognises that this entails removing himself from spaces where he might become involved in "bad aspects" of masculinity with many other boys. He focuses on his family and soccer in order to protect him from engaging in negative activities he associates with men in general.

PG emphasises that masculinity is a struggle: for him the struggle centres on the challenge of providing for a family within an impoverished context (239-249). His goal to become educated and work is directed at this aim. This struggle is unique to men. Because of their superior position more is expected of men (239). However, PG recognises that this responsibility comes hand in hand with the privileges that men are afforded, such as opportunities to play sport and the fact that they cannot get pregnant and ruin a career (253-258).

### *Features of hegemonic masculinity*

PG does not give many details about the features of the dominant version of masculinity, but he does suggest that it involves living a care-free existence and is enacted in the space of male peers (182-186). He mentions that masculinity is associated with "bad things", but

does not explicate what these might be (79-83), aside from mentioning that he and his friends avoid alcohol (269-270). Based on the narratives of HM described by other TAI participants, it may be reasonable to assume that the bad things refer to having many girlfriends and substance abuse.

*Positioning in relation to hegemonic norms*

PG explicitly distances himself from the hegemonic norms, stating quite clearly that there are aspects of masculinity that are dangerous. Soccer offers an alternative manner of being a man which successfully avoids these bad aspects. The “distancing” he mentions below may indicate that he splits his identity as a hegemonic man from the pressure to avoid bad things.

PG: There is a lot of bad things that happen in this world and it seems like most of the bad things happen to and around men and when you play soccer you are able to distance yourself from most of that because most of your time is spent practicing and playing on the field.

(PG: 79-83)

A core feature of PG’s masculinity narrative is having goals. PG’s goals are specifically related to having a good job and being able to provide for a family. He sees two possible paths to this goal: the first is through soccer (71-74), the second through education (115-120). This is one of the more challenging aspects of masculinity. Given his impoverished context, being able to become educated and support a family becomes a major challenge for

PG. However, this challenge is a crucial defining feature of his masculinity. Furthermore, men's desirability is seen by PG to lie in their ability to provide:

PG: A lot is expected from you as compared to a woman. When it comes to family for one, it is expected of you to look after your family. So as a boy you must know that you will need to get an education so you'll be able to get a good job and be able to support your family. When you don't have an education you won't be able to get married, nobody would want to marry you but women are able to get married even when they do not have an education. They are able to get married to men who will look after them and their family, including the extended family. If you are a man without an education, okay let's say without a job; it becomes very difficult.

(PG: 239-249)

Alongside having goals is the avoidance of the bad aspects of HM. PG observes that soccer affords protection from the bad aspects of masculinity, such as drinking (138-141). These bad aspects of masculinity he specifically associates with the township (140-141). Soccer, which occurs outside the township, thus protects him.

### *Strategies for maintaining masculinity*

PG locates his less-risky version of masculinity in a separate space: the network that soccer offers as an escape from the township. While he subscribes to many aspects of the township masculinity, he is pressured to position himself alongside more sanitised norms that are less

risky. Through this strategy the issue of transportation becomes very important for PG. Not having a car, he relies on taxis (relatively expensive) and trains (cheaper) to get where he needs to go, in particular to soccer practice (166-176). PG describes how the train “gets me where I want to go” (169). This may be taken as figuratively as meaning taking him out of the context of the township, and into spaces such as the soccer stadium there he may attempt to reach his goals for a better life.

PG deals with the demands of his hegemonic and counter-hegemonic voices by splitting them off from each other into separate spaces. The extract above (lines 79-83) indicates the need to “distance yourself” from the bad aspects inherent to masculinity.

### ***Analysis of MM – The successful hegemonic soccer star.***

#### *Overview*

MM is a talented soccer player, and receives many accolades from his peers, girls and community for his achievements. This places him in a position of confidence and security in his masculinity, and his version of masculinity is based around soccer and popularity with women.

#### *Features of dominant masculinity*

Important features of this masculinity are having girlfriends, having money or material wealth, playing soccer, not abusing substances and being a provider. It is important to note that MM positions this masculinity as a polar opposite to femininity, creating an essential

difference between men and women. MM uses these values in a hegemonic way – that is in order to maintain essential distinctions and power differences between men and women.

Unlike some other boys, for whom soccer has a purely defensive function against risky aspects of masculinity, soccer for MM also has a hegemonic function. For KS, for example, soccer provides a safe space in which to excuse his non-conformity to hegemonic norms. Soccer, for MM, has two functions. The first entails using soccer to prevent involvement in behaviours that might jeopardise future success.

MM: It is good to have right friends because even in playing soccer  
you prevent yourself from doing bad things such as smoking and  
being involved in crime. I would say that soccer keeps you away  
from such things.

(MM: 81-84)

The second function of soccer is to create a sense of popularity or “fame”. MM uncritically accepts HM, and uses the narratives of soccer in order to give him greater popularity.

Int: What makes you so famous if you are famous?

MM: Most of the times when walking on other places you find that  
you are greeted by people you don't even know who they know  
you. So something that makes me famous, I think is soccer  
because I have travelled because of it even where I go there  
are those who know me.

(MM: 203-208)



MM views men and women as essentially different. There are behaviours which are acceptable for boys and unacceptable for girls, even if this creates a logical absurdity, such as the double standard in the following extract.

MM: I can say that things that make a girl to be ugly are the things that she does like say having many boyfriends, and going with cars and liking parties.

So boys do not like girls like those....

Int: Okay. Alright. What do guys like when it comes to asking girls out or when it comes to having a relationship with them?

MM: Well what I can say is that as boys we want to have sex with her.

(MM: 305-314)

Provision is an important part of MM's masculinity, but he recognises that it is one of the greatest challenges of masculinity.

MM: Yes, there is because especially if you are in a situation when everyone is looking up to you and if you are in a critical condition and maybe can not be able to provide or be present where your family needs you to be.

(MM: 332-335)

#### *Positioning in relation to masculinity norms*

Through his soccer, MM aligns himself squarely with the HM norms. There may be signs of a slight struggle to meet the expectations as a provider, but this is not an emphasised aspect of his masculinity, and thus does not cause him any great concern.

### *Alternative masculinity*

MM does not seem to entertain the possibility of alternative masculinities. Certainly for him they are not needed, because he appears to be highly successful in maintaining his masculine identity in relation to the hegemonic form of masculinity he describes. There is some evidence (see extract above, lines 81-84) that he sanitises the more risky aspects of his masculinity, but this seems to be his only deviation from positioning himself squarely alongside hegemonic values.

### *Voices present in the interview*

While the voice of the Soccer man is clearly dominant, there seems to be an alternative, although subjugated, voice which MM uses to narrate a more humble masculinity. His elders, he suggests, and girls, like to see a well-behaved individual who is humble.

MM: Ja be able to humble yourself before people, and be a good example, but what is important is respect amongst other people, so even the way you do things is the way people see it. It becomes a good example to people and they are able to respect you as a man.

Int: Okay, alright,

(MM: 143-148)

MM: I can say that when I'm at home I stay with old people and the way I behave, I can say is respectful.

(MM: 228-229)

In contrast, his voice in relation to his peers is far more confident and self-assured, allowing himself to enjoy his successes as a soccer player. This voice dominates the interview, and is also socially dominant due to its position in the hegemonic hierarchy.

### *Analysis of SN – A Quiet Struggle for Manhood.*

#### *Overview*

SN's life is very stressful. He comes from a very poor family, and is very conscious of how this poverty puts him at a disadvantage in relation to many of his peers. He is also teased for not having smart clothes, not being a particularly good soccer player, and not having many girlfriends.

The clearest feature of SN's sense of masculinity is the constant struggle he endures in order to sustain it. Like the rest of his life, his masculine identity is also a struggle. A key feature of masculinity is about facing hardships ("These are bad times for young boys like me", 493).

SN: It's not easy being a man. Sometimes responsibilities can be  
too much and more than what you can do

Int: What kind of responsibilities are you talking about?

SN: If the family is struggling you have to go and find a job. And  
sometimes working can be a problem

(SN: 1145-1149)

There are other ways in which SN feels that masculinity is a struggle. He is teased by his peers for not conforming to some of the important expectations in masculinity. SN feels he does not meet the expectations of the dominant masculinity, especially not in relation to his peers. Many of the aspects he perceives to be the standards of HM are out of his reach. Because he does not have money for clothes, or the ability to succeed at soccer he is teased. Because he does not have many girlfriends he is also teased:

SN: Friends increases your stress, friends have a bad tendency of teasing you if they found out you do not like something. They will keep on calling you by a name once they have found out that you do not like it.

(SN: 401-404)

He is teased for a number of reasons, including an incident where he was called "stupid" by a teacher after failing a class test:

SN: Firstly, its girls, secondly its school and thirdly what I can say it's when you are playing soccer and you find that you are not performing well in the field.

SN: 423-425)

Not doing well at school is particularly painful for him, because working hard and succeeding at school is an important aspect of his masculinity. The resultant teasing has had the effect that SN is acutely sensitive about his perceived "failures" as a man, and his personal masculinity narrative can be seen as reactionary to the HM that has subjugated him through his inability to conform.

### *Features of hegemonic masculinity*

SN identifies a number of features of masculinity that are hegemonic in nature. They are: being “famous”, having girlfriends, having frequent sex, substance abuse, involvement in crime and violence, having money or possessions, being well-dressed, being independent of parental care and rules, being unproductive, and patriarchy. It is significant to note that SN places the majority of boys in the hegemonic category: “Most or 90% of boys do this and 10% maybe behave well” (SN: 910). SN seems to ascribe good behaviour as *not* an innate property of men, indicating a belief in the innate “badness” of masculinity, which most participants also seemed to indicate and attempt to avoid. Here SN confirms that irresponsible masculinity occurs “naturally”:

SN: Even if the woman falls pregnant they will deny the responsibility saying the child is not theirs. These are boys my age. This happens naturally. They are many of them who have fathered babies but deny the fathering of those babies.

(SN: 332-335)

### *Positioning in relation to hegemonic norms*

While he supports many of the HM values (such as having nice clothes, and being successful and a provider, SN is largely unsuccessful in attaining these standards. While some of the norms he opposes strongly, there are others where he seems unsure of himself (being popular, having girlfriends, and being well dressed). His alternative narrative of masculinity is not based on principled rejection of hegemonic norms, but rather his failure to

attain these standards. He is interactively positioned by his peers as Other, despite evidence that he wants to conform to hegemonic norms. SN seems to be excluded from HM in several ways. Firstly, he is unable to dress in expensive clothes because of his poverty. Secondly, he does not have girlfriends. Thirdly, he is not "famous" or popular.

Having girlfriends is a source of ambivalence, and a sense of failure as a man. At times he indicates strong opposition to this norm, but at other times SN seems embarrassed by the prospect of girlfriends, perhaps from wanting one, yet feeling unable to attain one:

Int: So do girls like boys who play football?

SN: Yes girls do like soccer players.

Int: Do they like you as well?

SN: No they like them.

Int: What about you? You are also a soccer player?

SN: It's just that I do not like girls.

(SN: 435-440)

SN lacks the "fame" he perceives to be required to be popular with girls. This results in a sense of failure, which is very painful for him:

Int: Oh okay, if you are not famous how is it like?

SN: If you are not well known it's painful because people treat you

anyhow seeing that you are nothing and as a result cannot say

something that has sense. Some even ask what are you?

(SN: 1012-1015)

SN views many men as irresponsible, and objects to irresponsible sex, violence, crime and substance use. In the following quote SN clearly dis-identifies with HM, as illustrated by separating the "We" from the "They".

SN: We do not even sleep at night especially on

Fridays and Saturdays, as they are drunk and making loud music.

(SN: 912-913)

However, his use of pronouns in the following extract indicates that he positions himself alongside hegemonic, irresponsible men:

SN: I think it's because oh I think the problem starts with us men

in that we do not take care of ourselves while we are still

young. We sleep around and mothers do not tell their children

because the father denied responsibility for that child and

that mother is also not sure as to who fathered that baby.

(SN: 364-368)

This illustrates interesting splitting, as he clearly at other times identifies with hegemonic norms but fails to attain them.

He also objects to breaking ties with one's parents and rebelling against their conventions, despite them thinking that he is "nuts" (243). Here he reflexively positions himself against hegemonic norms, aligning himself away from them.

SN: This is because they think that they are



now old and independent. They think their parents are fools if they try to speak sense to them. These kids do not have respect. I grew up with them and I know them.

(SN: 245-248)

Patriarchy, or the belief that men should lead women, is a common theme in SN's discussions of masculinity. His positioning in relation to this norm is clearly contradictory to his position taken up in the previous two extracts where he is against HM. SN indicates that male children carry a burden of responsibility for hardships because of their position as men.

SN: Yes it is very important as young kids today know everything.

It is important to teach them while they are still young as the saying says that we have to teach our kids while they are still young.

Int: So you think that kids should be taught while still young?

SN: Yes, like male children/men are the ones who know most things and they know so many hardships.

(SN: 307-313)

Masculinity is about leadership. Perhaps SN uses this discourse to enable himself as a masculine agent. By accepting this norm (which argues that men are inherently in a position of power because of their sex) SN is able to derive a sense of power and prowess. Patriarchy (and the power it affords) is not based on ability or achievement. Simply because he is a male, SN can draw power from this narrative.

SN does not have an alternative masculine identity that is positioned away from HM.

Rather, he identifies with, yet fails to conform to, hegemonic norms. He then defensively sanitises aspects of HM in an attempt to create a sense of identity.

### *Sanitised hegemonic masculinity norms*

For SN responsible masculinity is about taking care of his family and avoiding risky sexual behaviour. Responsibilities are a core feature of manhood. Responsibility can be seen as a direct contrast to the unproductiveness and independence of HM. SN argues that responsible behaviour entails looking after others and rising above one's own needs. However, this value can also be hegemonic and patriarchal, indicating that SN is more likely using a sanitised version of HM. The implication in the extract below is that only he (a man) could fulfil this role as provider. He also assumes implicitly that it is his role (because he is a man) to be a provider, this indicating positioning in the hegemonic camp.

SN: I will have to be responsible and not wait for parents to tell  
me what to do....

These are some of the responsibilities I have to carry out. In  
this way I will be showing love to the family. If I see that we  
do not have bread at home I should ask for money and go and buy  
bread even if I am full and not hungry.

(SN: 812-820)

SN situated his sanitised masculinity squarely in the space of his family, away from the teasing of his peers. Relationships, support and provision are important to him. His duty

towards his family is his primary responsibility, and constitutes the basis for many of the challenges mentioned above.

While playing soccer (successfully) is important to SN, he at times doubts his ability to play. This contributes to his feelings that he might be a failure as a man. He identifies with the soccer playing norm, but is not always successful in positioning himself alongside it because he questions his skill as a player.

SN: You even ask yourself / if this game was meant for you or not.

Sometimes your performance will be fine sometimes not.

(SN: 429-431)

### *Strategies to maintain his sense of masculinity*

SN is subjugated to the HM discourse. He positions himself reflexively away from hegemony, and is positioned interactively by others away from it. However, he nevertheless identifies with many hegemonic norms, viewing HM as the “real” (or only) way to be a man. In order to protect his sense of manhood, which he experiences as marginalised and fragile, he employs a number of strategies.

Firstly, he situates his alternative in the space of his family and a select few soccer-playing friends. He draws collective support from his friends who are similar to him, taking care to avoid the boys who enact HM, who often tease him for being different.

SN: Having friends does help but it depends on what kind of friends

you have. I do not think you should have a friend who is not playing soccer if you are a soccer player.

(SN: 509-511)

Secondly, SN makes claims that his alternative masculinity is superior to HM, and that he is content and happy to identify with the alternative. In this way he claims his difference as a strength, instead of a source of teasing and uncertainty. This is a rather thin rationalisation, however, and does not do much to reduce his sense of failure. For example, in the following quote he argues that it is more important to have a clean home than to be well-dressed like the popular “famous” boys.

SN: This is picture no.10 and this is a flower, which is here to beautify the home. I took this photo because I thought it's important to love your home. It does not matter what people say about you. Even if you do not wear expensive clothes as long as your home is fine and clean that is all that matters.

(SN: 794-798)

A third strategy SN uses to maintain his sense of masculinity intact is to accept and enact hegemonic norms. One example of this was discussed previously where SN uses patriarchal norms to instil himself with a sense of power and purpose. Another example can be seen in the language he uses when describing some of his alternative values. In the following extract SN uses the violent language of HM to describe the importance of having goals for the future. The use of such language equips him with a sense of being masculine in a hegemonic way, and hence a “real man”:

Int: Okay, what kind of a man do we call a real man?

SN: A real man is the one who fights for the future. Someone who fights for what he wants. Just like me as a soccer player I have to work hard and fight for success. I shouldn't postpone things. For example if the coach is not in the gym I should not encourage others to stop training but I should tell them to go on exercising. In that way I will be fighting and be serious about succeeding in soccer. A real man fights for the future.

(SN: 1037-1044)

*Voices evident in the interview*

SN narrates this interview in two voices: the first is the voice of his mother, which is humble, non-sexist, and family orientated. The second voice is a patriarchal voice, which is narrated from the perspective of a version of HM.

The voice of his mother is present in the space of the family – he has close relationships with his family members and they are important to him. He is more distanced from his peers, and has had many bad experiences with peers that have left him cautious. These voices are clearly split, and are located in separate spaces physically and psychologically. Because of the ambivalence and inherent contradiction in his opposing voices, SN is unable to dialogue these voices which are therefore maintained in parallel. The voice of his mother is the dominant voice in the interview – his hegemonic voice is subjugated to it, and this lack of hegemonic confidence is echoed in his sense of failed manhood.

## *Analysis of SM1 – Re-inventing patriarchy.*

### *Overview*

SM1 accepts and enacts a hegemonic version of masculinity that is based on patriarchy, soccer and Zulu culture.

SM1 also has to negotiate the influence of TAI, which is particularly encouraging of boys to avoid risky behaviours (sex, drugs) and invest in their education and future. Therefore, he rejects certain aspects of HM, such as drug use and criminal behaviour. He displays considerable ambivalence and multiple voices about having girlfriends.

SM1 seems to incorporate the TAI influence (or voice) seamlessly into his hegemonic version of masculinity. He creates a sanitised version of HM based on playing soccer, like other participants, by avoiding certain aspects of HM (drugs and alcohol).

SM1 has to employ certain strategies to maintain his masculinity and make it seem more politically correct. SM1 attempts to reframe certain aspects of his hegemonic beliefs in order to make them more acceptable to the TAI standards of masculinity. He reframes patriarchy and the power he believes men should have over women into drawing a distinction between “fear” and “respect”.

Int: How do you differentiate between these two men? Tell me the  
difference between a respected and feared man?

SM1: A feared man is one who isn't approachable when requiring money

for school needs. For instance, you have to first approach your mum and that's all fear. You're scared to tell your dad anything, for example, you're even scared to tell them you need polish for your school shoes. When you're like that you're not a father, you're just feared. You must be respected not feared.

(SM1: 360-367)

### *Features of hegemonic masculinity*

SM1 speaks of two distinct types of hegemonic man, the Zulu-patriarch (Zulu Man) and the Partying boy (Party Boy).

#### *Zulu Man*

The Zulu patriarch masculinity is characterised by a belief in traditional Zulu values, respect for elders, and being an honourable member of the community:

SM1: Being a boy means that you have to hope to become an honourable man in the future and be a good example to the community because there is a saying that says "the path is asked from the elders". I see myself being the man who does good things. So everything has to be done accordingly so that I become an honourable man.

(SM1: 328-333)



These values are embodied within patriarchy, and SM1's explicit belief that men should rule over women:

Int: What do you love most about being a man/boy?

SM1: What I love most about being a boy is that there're things I  
can do as a boy, like laying down the rules at home....

Int: In other words as a boy you can play the father role when he's  
not there? So that's the only thing you like about being a boy?

SM1: Yes I like to rule.

(SM1: 371-380)

SM1 refers to masculine "presence", which he understands to be the ability that men have and women do not to make rules and be respected.

SM1: I see it in my community. Families with only a mother as a  
parent or if the father comes home once a month because he  
works far from home. When the mother puts down a rule it gets  
ignored or it's not followed strictly. So a man has a  
"presence" that a woman doesn't have.

(SM1: 351-355)

Sexual ability is also crucial to masculinity, even if only potential sexuality. While SM1 identifies with the value of avoiding sex and girls until later in life (in an attempt to sanitise his hegemony), he makes it clear that he is masculine because of his sexual potential:

Int: Okay. At which time do you mostly feel like a man, what are you  
doing at that time and with whom?

SM1: The time I get wet dreams at night. Dreaming of a girl I wish  
to marry in the future and wake up wet.

(SM1: 407-410)

### Party Boy

SM1 also describes the partying boy, another form of HM, which is associated more with male peers than his elders. SM1 opposes many of these values, including having many girlfriends, frequent sex, being popular, and involvement with crime and drugs (215-219). The hallmark of this form of masculinity is the carefree involvement in parties.

SM1: They like doing things that will make them come in contact with  
girls, like throwing parties (slang: Nkwari)

Int: What are Nkwaris? Please explain

SM1: Things they do at night, blasting radios, buying alcohol, and  
braaing meat. Things like that, which will involve girls.

(SM1: 551-555)

### *Positioning in relation to hegemonic norms*

SM1 positions himself firmly within the values and norms of the Zulu Man masculinity. His sense of masculine identity arises out of his historical and cultural context, affording him considerable hegemonic power in relation to other versions of masculinity. He successfully identifies with the norms of patriarchal power, sexual ability, and the importance of making money.

With regards to the Party Boy masculinity, he is firmly opposed to becoming involved in crime and substance abuse. He also opposes the norm of having many girlfriends, arguing that it is not proper for boys to have girlfriends before they are older. SM1 positions himself away from these values for a number of possible reasons. Firstly, he may recognise the risk of HIV associated with multiple girlfriends. Secondly, he maybe influenced by TAI to sanitise his masculinity.

He does, however, experience a sense of loss at not being among the popular Party Boys. He does not see himself as popular among his peers, and would value the popularity that is afforded to the Party Boys. This indicates that he does identify with the hegemonic norm of having multiple partners, yet has to oppose this norm for the sake of his sanitised version of masculinity. He is teased by other boys for not having girlfriends and partying:

SM1: Yes I can still behave like a child and be polite.

Int: And popular guys don't do that?

SM1: Yes.

Int: Do they laugh at you when you're doing these things, like being  
polite?

SM1: Yes they do laugh at me.

Int: Why do they laugh?

SM1: They think that I'm stupid, a fool and don't know anything.

(SM1: 584-591)

SM1's cultural observances of respecting his elder are in tension with the other form of HM he identifies. He is able to derive his sense of masculinity based on the power that

traditionalism and patriarchy affords him, even if he is not considered popular by some of his peers. However, this does come at a cost to him.

### *Strategies to maintain masculine identity*

SM1 uses two strategies to sustain his sense of masculine identity, and to deal with his ambivalence around having sexual partners. The first is to revert to the cultural traditions of Zulu masculinity and locate his sense of manhood within a rich and established history. The second is to protect his identity from the “bad” aspects of masculinity by locating it in the space of soccer.

SM1 suggests that it is important to be respectful, especially to one’s elders:

664 Int: What made you behave differently from other boys?

665 SM1: Because I would like my days on earth to be long. There is a

666 saying in the bible that says “respect your parents so that

667 your days on earth will be long”.

Having goals for the future is also an important aspect of masculinity for SM1. Playing soccer is seen as a route to reach that goal, but is also an important aspect of masculinity is itself. Soccer is important because it prevents boys from engaging in risky activities such as taking drugs.

SM1: Yes, drugs and alcohol. According to picture no. 26, shows my  
team mates and I coming back from the gym. The time we come

back is in the afternoon, you can see from the picture that it's dark. Soccer keeps us busy, there's no time to be doing bad things. You come from school, go to gym and come back from gym around this time to do your homework.

(SM1: 159-164)

The risks of the Party Boy masculinity (especially having multiple partners) revolve around HIV/AIDS.

Int: What dangers do you see for a man who sleeps around with girls and drinking alcohol?

SM1: They could contract infections such as STIs', AIDS and that will distract him from becoming an honourable man in the future.

(SM1: 434-438)

SM1 avoids crime, drugs and girls, is respectful towards his elders, and plays soccer as part of a sanitised masculinity to protect him from HIV. Many of these values are similar to those that TAI promotes through their interventions with boys. It seems that SM1 has adopted the values of TAI as a version of masculinity, and as an influential voice, but has integrated these seamlessly into his HM. SM1 uses the language of TAI to justify his beliefs, and reframes his beliefs into more acceptable-sounding forms. The influence of TAI on SM1's masculinity can be seen as a separate voice.

### *Voices of masculinity present in the interview*

SM1's masculinity arises from the tension between two voices: the Zulu-man voice, and the TAI voice. The Zulu-man voice is traditional, and expects respect and prestige. The TAI voice encourages him to avoid sex, drugs and crime. This is not a problem for SM1 in so far as it does not affect his prestige as a man. For example, he is happy to avoid girls – for now. Nevertheless, he informs the interviewer that he is a man (and positions himself in the hegemonic camp): he has wet dreams.

Soccer can be used by either voice: it is hegemonic, as it is exclusive to men and affords players popularity and prestige. It is also a vehicle for TAI to promote healthy masculinity. For SM1, it gives the opportunity to hide his hegemonic beliefs behind a claim at having an alternative masculinity.

Mostly, SM1 narrates from the perspective of the Zulu-man voice. The values he endorses, and the experiences he relates confirm this. It is clearly the dominant voice. However, at times he relates in a voice that indicates another perspective. This perspective is characterised by a concern with health risk behaviours and positive, health living. In short, it is a voice that is influenced by SM1's experiences with TAI.

### *Analysis of SM2 – A failed hegemonic man.*

#### *Overview*

SM2 comes from a poor family. He lives with his three brothers as his father passed away and his mother does not live with them as she has to work.

SM2 identifies with HM, yet fails to successfully position himself as a hegemonic man. He excuses his failure by associating HM with crime, drinking and ultimately not succeeding in life. He is strongly motivated to become educated and get a job. For him to achieve this he will have to struggle and work hard, through soccer and education, to avoid the "bad things" of masculinity and to make something of himself.

His father, who died, is an important exemplar of masculinity to him: responsible, family orientated, and open. SM2 does not feel that his version of masculinity is appreciated by other boys. He feels socially isolated from boys who do not play soccer and share similar beliefs to himself.

#### *Features of hegemonic masculinity*

For SM2, crime and the "fast life" are core features of HM.

SM2: [T]here are / those who like to get things the quick way. So my way needs patience and someone who knows what they want with their future.... [but] the fast life gets you beaten up when you're trying to steal or you may even end up dying.

(SM2: 242-250)

The features of having expensive, flashy clothes and cars, and showing these off are an important feature of this masculinity. Boys who achieve this are very popular with girls.



Another core feature of HM is the belief in patriarchy, and the inherent superiority of men over women. SM2 suggests that men are natural leaders and are responsible for educating women about what is right and what is wrong (350-358). Physical strength is a feature of this, and requires that men be protectors and providers (368-376).

#### *Positioning in relation to hegemonic norms*

SM2 strongly opposes the norm of living the “fast life”. However, he does identify successfully with patriarchy, believing that his masculine strength puts him in a position of power over women.

Most notably, however, and causing an acute sense of deprivation for SM2, is his failure to identify with the norm of popularity based on flashy clothes and cars. It is unlikely that he is in a position to afford to buy expensive clothes. He reframes the idea of popularity to suit his definition of masculinity (based on hard work and success). He also then denies his desire for popularity, arguing that popularity is a source of stress and pressure. These contradictory statements suggest that he is ambivalent around being popular.

#### *Features of sanitised masculinity*

SM2 identifies other features of masculinity (also predominantly hegemonic), but are based around on norms that he feels able to align himself with. These are responsibility, looking after a family, becoming educated or playing soccer in order to succeed in life, and avoiding

the bad aspects of HM (the crime and substance use). This sanitised masculinity is based around the model provided to him by his father:

SM2: An ideal man is one who can handle his responsibilities in terms of family, live life in a respectable manner, an approachable man even to young boys, someone who can give advice without getting angry just because he's not your biological father; an open man.

(SM2: 608-612)

SM2 identifies strongly with these norms. He hopes that he will be able to afford to have a family, to protect and to provide for them:

SM2: About being a man? As I said before, I love being responsible in many ways, being a guide for many. What makes me happy is that I know that one day I'll be responsible for a family that I'll be taking care of, providing for all their needs

(SM2: 792-795)

In order to do this, SM2 believes that a man has to patiently work hard and become educated in order to be successful. He indicates two possible routes to success: the first is through studying (or entrepreneurship), and the second is through soccer.

This form of masculinity is, however, a struggle. It requires vigilance and care to avoid becoming seduced by the "fast life" that the "bad aspects" of HM offer.

Int: But as a young player facing many of the obstacles and challenges that young players face, what do you think is the one obstacle or challenge that could hinder the achievement of your dreams?

SM2: Mm maybe finding myself in the company of the wrong friends, ending up doing bad things like drinking, but because I'm aware of such things I do not think such things would happen to me.

(SM2: 38-44)

SM2 has created a clear dichotomy between his own sanitised version of masculinity, and HM. For him, success as a man entails careful avoidance of the hegemonic practices and values. Soccer provides a means of avoiding the bad things in masculinity (188-194). Like all other participants, SM2 uses soccer as a means of separating the "bad" and acceptable aspects of HM.

#### *Strategies for maintaining masculinity*

For SM2, being a man is not an easy task. He locates his masculinity within safe spaces – particularly the spaces of friends who play soccer. Other boys may put pressure on him to engage in "bad things", and thus he prefers to avoid them altogether:

SM2: I'm also not the type of person who likes to go out and mingle with people. The people I'm proud to spend time with are the boys I'm looking after, the boys I coach. I'm comfortable with and around them because I know that due to their age they can't teach me any things or

have negative influences on me.

(SM2: 394-399)

Being marginalised and not being popular is difficult for SM2. He shows considerable ambivalence about whether he identifies or dis-identifies with the popularity norm. It seems that he secretly identifies, or envies, the norm around being popular with girls, but cannot state this clearly because 1) he feels unpopular himself, and 2) it is against his sanitised masculinity. To compensate for this reframes the popularity norm to suit his version of masculinity. Here popularity is not about having flashy clothes and multiple girlfriends but being able to “show off” less risky masculine qualities like education and goals:

Int: What makes those who are popular popular? What is it that they end up doing or they feel they need to do in order to be popular?

SM2: I think showing off how well off they are, how educated they are, and showing that they can get whatever they want, because when someone is educated, it becomes easier for them to get a car, or anything they want, and people can see where this person is going with their life.

(SM2: 560-567)

He also uses denial to cope with this ambivalence, rejecting entirely the notion that he may want to be popular: “I think it’s nice not being popular because you can do your thing without the eye of society and pressure from society” (SM2: 584-585).

### *Voices of Masculinity*

SM2 seems to narrate from a single perspective only, using one voice. This voice promotes the ideals of his version of masculinity: responsibility, family, success. It originates in relation to his father.

### ***Synthesis of Findings.***

The findings of this study indicate that, while identities based on HM are difficult to negotiate and maintain, not a single participant has a sense of masculinity that could be considered alternative. All participants, even those who were marginalised by HM, unquestionable accepted it as the hallmark of authentic masculinity. Self positions that were counter-hegemonic were problematised by the individuals enacting them, either as being “failed” versions, or by creating pressure to provide excuses for the deviance from the hegemonic norm.

### *About hegemonic masculinities*

Although there were variations in the individual accounts of what constituted HM, there were a number of features that emerged as commonalities. The results indicate that there are a number of shared features of HM that occur in this context. In addition, there were some minor features that appear to be specific to individual boys.

Heterosexuality was an underlying, but un-stated norm of HM. Having girlfriends and engaging in sex with girls was that a very important feature of the shared HM discourse, which was recognised universally by the participants. For all participants, sex was recognised as a problematic issue, especially the expectation that men should have multiple partners. This was perceived as being part of the innate masculine sex drive, and was inextricably linked to being a man. However, this was recognised as being a dangerous norm, due to the high risk of contracting HIV through having multiple sexual partners. For many boys, the issue of sex was split: it seemed to them as if they either had to take a stand for sex and masculinity, or to give up their manhood and be against sex. Naturally, this caused profound ambivalence for most participants. The result of this split was seeing the emergence of sanitised versions of masculinity – versions of masculinity that were clearly hegemonic in nature, yet involved strategies to avoid the “bad” aspects of masculinity.

These boys were caught between, on one hand, viewing sex as a natural part of being a man and, on the other, viewing sex as harmful (through the risk to self and other). As a result, running throughout the interviews, was the thread of a discourse labelling men and masculinity as innately bad. Ironically, boys felt that they had to protect themselves from aspects of their own masculinity, and located their identities in safe spaces, such as the network of places, activities and relationships provided by soccer.

Crime and substance abuse as features of HM intersected with these beliefs about sex, completing the picture of masculinity as innately bad. PG’s statement summarises this view: “There is a lot of bad things that happen in this world and it seems like most of the bad things happen to and around men” (PG: 79-80).

Having money or flashy possessions (such as clothes, shoes or cars) was considered by nearly all participants to be a hallmark of the dominant form of masculinity. Most of these boys come from impoverished township contexts, making attaining these items difficult. Those boys who were seen to have these possessions were thus afforded a lot of status.

The focus on money and having possessions, and other displays of wealth, it can be argued, is context specific. For these boys for whom often daily life is a financial struggle, a sign of status and achievement would inevitably include becoming wealthy. In all of the interviews the issue of poverty was a theme. For many boys, rising above their circumstances through education and hard work was a primary feature of their sense of masculinity, which will be discussed further below.

The clear finding from this study is that these boys clearly identified with hegemonic values, and this poses a substantial risk to the health of young men.

#### *"Sanitised" hegemonic masculinities*

One of the purposes of this study was to identify alternative, non-hegemonic discourses of masculinity. It is believed that conforming to a set of norms that is different to those embodied by HM will promote healthier living for men and their partners (Lindegger & Durrheim, 2002). However, the findings of this study indicate that no such non-hegemonic masculinities exist within this sample. This is a surprising finding, as these boys are all members of TAI, and have been the recipients of multiple interventions designed to promote health alternative masculinities.



While there were no alternative versions of masculinity, however, it was clear that all of these boys were at pains to consolidate into a coherent identity the values of HM with the values of TAI. The strategy employed by all boys to do this was to develop sanitised versions of masculinity. These sanitised versions, while hegemonic, attempted to make the risky values of HM (for example, having multiple sexual partners) more politically correct.

The creation of sanitised masculinities was the source of considerable ambivalence in these boys, who had to find ways of maintaining a HM identity while not enacting (or saying they opposed) core hegemonic values such as having multiple sexual partners. This ambivalence resulting in the splitting of “good” from “bad” aspects of masculinity to preserve the sense of self, and was the origin of multiple voices of masculinity in participants.

#### *Strategies for maintaining successful masculinities*

##### Drawing collective support

Several participants used the strategy of drawing collective support. This entailed aligning themselves with a group of boys (in this case fellow soccer players) who shared their values. This strategy is built on a fear of rejection or teasing by the hegemonic group, and is reactionary to this pressure. By associating exclusively with fellow TAI soccer players, boys were able to avoid the pressure of HM and to build a collective identity that normalises their own identity. In addition, these boys, through their collective identity, are equipped with a more powerful discourse by which they can justify their masculinities or even attempt to

turn the hegemonic hierarchy on its head. For example, DM argues that his group of friends is better than the hegemonic group that teases him:

DM: It happens because they think we belong to a different group and they think they are better than us. We also think the same way about them.

(DM: 569-571)

### Locating safe spaces

The most common strategy to sustain an alternative masculine identity is to locate it in a safe space. The space that was used by these boys was the space afforded by the network involved in playing soccer.

SM1: Soccer keeps us busy, there's no time to be doing bad things. You come from school, go to gym and come back from gym around this time to do your homework.

(SM1: 161-164)

The risk of leaving the space of soccer, and its effect on the sanitised version of masculinity is illustrated by SM2 in the extract below. If he was to leave the safe space, he would open himself to the very real risk of being influenced by hegemonic peers to enact some of the bad aspects of masculinity. The strength of the potential negative influence of HM, as portrayed here, indicates that SM2 perceives the bad aspects of masculinity as inevitable and innate if not protected against.

SM2 I'm also not the type of person

who likes to go out and mingle with people. The people I'm proud to spend time with are the boys I'm looking after, the boys I coach. I'm comfortable with and around them because I know that due to their age they can't teach me any things or have negative influences on me

(SM2: 394-399)

### Using parallel voices to maintain sanitised masculinity

Many of the participants indicated that at least two voices were narrating within the interview. The presence of multiple voices emerged as a key strategy by which many of these boys managed the ambivalence around their sanitised masculinities. The presence of parallel voices indicates that boys split aspects of their masculine identities and have multiple identities which operate in different contexts. This was illustrated in an exemplary manner by DM would not be seen holding girls in front of the boys he coaches. He indicates acceptance of the norm of having multiple girlfriends, but limits this to certain contexts. In other contexts, the context of soccer, he wants to have a safer, sanitised version of masculinity.

Int: So you should be a role model all the time. What is it that you can not do in front of them that could send a wrong message to them?

DM: Dating girls in front of them

Int: Is this bad?

DM: No it's not; it's just that well I don't know how I can explain

this. It's good and bad. You are not supposed to be seen holding girls in front of people. You should be where there are not so many people where you can relax and be free.

(DM: 723-731)

*Multiple Voices and Dialogical Aspects of Masculinity.*

The emergence of multiple voices of masculinity in the analysis lends itself to the application of dialogical theory. As mentioned above, boys had multiple versions of masculinity which were linked to different spaces. Many of these masculine voices seemed to operate in parallel – boys did not position themselves permanently in relation to one discourse over another. Rather, their positioning was fluid and ambiguous, with them often giving contradictory accounts of their masculinities.

These voices present in each boy tended to reflect the conflict between hegemonic and sanitised norms. For example, the voices were usually a voice representing hegemonic norms, like having multiple girlfriends, and a voice representing the value of avoiding these dangerous aspects of masculinity. Many participants attempted to keep their voices separated spatially, and in this way maintain the voices in parallel. This was to avoid the inevitable conflict and ambivalence that would arise if these contradictory perspectives were dialogued. An example of this is the use of the strategy of locating safe spaces to maintain sanitised versions of masculinity. There was only evidence in one of the interview texts of a participant who appeared to attempt to dialogue his voices. The example below will clearly illustrate this ambivalence.

Hermans, Kempen and van Loon (1992) suggest that voices may engage in dialogue with each other. Dialogue is indicated by clear evidence of multiple perspectives being narrated simultaneously, where the narrator is struggling to make a coherent whole out of the possible contradictory perspectives. The following extracts indicate dialogue:

Int: So you should be a role model all the time. What is it that you  
can not do in front of them that could send a wrong message to them?

DM: Dating girls in front of them

Int: Is this bad?

DM: No it's not; it's just that well I don't know how I can explain  
this. It's good and bad. You are not supposed to be seen holding  
girls in front of people. You should be where there are not so  
many people where you can relax and be free.

(DM: 723-731)

There are two voices present in this interview. The most dominant voice is the *well-behaved boy*, a voice that values being a positive role model for younger boys and disavowing risky sexual practices, drinking alcohol or being involved in crime. The second voice is the *voice of hegemonic self* which values having multiple girlfriends. The one voice wants to be a role model, the second wants to "relax and be free" with girls. It is clear that DM is invested in both positions, which are clearly at odds. The result of the dialogue results in feelings of ambivalence ("No it's not; it's just that well I don't know how I can explain. It's good and bad"). This ambivalence (and therefore loss of his sense of certainty in his masculinity) is clearly illustrated in these lines taken from the same interview:

DM: I do not think it's a good idea to have two girlfriends it's

better to have one though it's also better to have two  
girlfriends.

(DM: 1061-1063)

Dialogue is clearly evident in this interview, and seems to be the source of a fair amount of uncertainty for DM. The other participants did not show evidence of attempting to dialogue voices in this way, leading to the conclusion that the voices must be maintained split off from each other, and in parallel. The space afforded by soccer, as discussed above, illustrates how this separation of voices works in practice to allow these boys to maintain their multiple masculine identities.

## DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to answer the question as to whether boys have and are able to maintain a masculinity that does not include the numerous risk-taking norms and oppressive practices that are common in forms of HM (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Under this general aim, there were a number of specific objectives:

1. To identify boys' narratives of the dominant norms of masculine performance and their position in relation to these standards;
2. To identify alternative narratives or versions of masculinity which are not based on dominant hegemonic norms;
3. To identify narratives of how the latter are developed and maintained in such a way that still allows adolescent boys to have an adequate sense of masculinity;
4. To explore the implications for HIV/AIDS prevention.

It emerged strongly, as will be discussed in detail below, that these boys did not have distinct versions of masculinity which are non-hegemonic. They did, however, have multiple versions of masculinity, some of which represented "sanitised" versions of HM. Negotiating an identity position in relation to the sanitised and "pure" form of HM proved challenging for these boys, and was the source of considerable ambivalence; particularly the issue of having multiple sexual partners.

This chapter will explore some reasons for the creation of these sanitised masculinities, and attempt to explain how these boys dealt with the ambivalence that having parallel versions of masculinity created.

### *Narratives of Hegemonic Masculinity.*

There were a number of common features characterising the descriptions of HM in this study: an emphasis on sexuality, having money and being able to provide, patriarchy, and involvement in crime and substance use. These features of HM are not surprising, and conform to previous findings in similar circumstances (e.g. Barker & Ricardo, 2005).

The emphasis on sexuality, crime, and drugs is particularly concerning because it indicates that core features of the dominant masculinity are behaviours which place young men and their partners at very high risk of harm, particularly from HIV/AIDS. This association has been suggested by a number of previous studies (e.g. Foreman, 1999). It emerged clearly in the present study that, for most boys, it was a struggle to avoid these dangerous aspects of masculinity. Whether they conformed to hegemonic norms, or distanced themselves from HM, it was clear that "bad aspects" of masculinity were an ever present feature of their masculinity narratives. An interesting point was boys' belief in the inherent "badness" of masculinity. Masculinity was seen as biological in nature, thus forcing boys to accept that to be real men, they would have to enact the bad aspects of masculinity. This created in the boys a sense of ambivalence about where to position themselves in relation to these contradictory standards.

The emphasis on having money and possessions and being able to provide has been identified as a core feature of hegemonic masculinities (Lindegger & Maxwell, 2005), particularly in the context of poverty (Barker & Ricardo, 2005). Barker and Ricardo (2005) have indicated that self-perceived "failures" to attain the standards of masculinity can become a pathway to domestic and other forms of violence. In the context of poverty, such



“failures” are inevitable. The findings of the present study clearly indicate that the impoverished circumstances in which these boys find themselves is an underlying theme throughout the interviews. The setting of goals, playing soccer, crime, and so forth, are all interpreted within the framework of becoming successful and attaining material wealth as a means of having a better life. Participant SN, for example, struggles with the fact that he is teased by his peers because he is unable to afford expensive clothes. It is clear that the widespread poverty characterising the study context has profound effects on the identities of adolescent boys, and their futures as men.

These findings confirm that HM is a canonical narrative in relation to which these young men construct their gender identity. The features of this kind of masculinity identified here are not at odds with those described by previous studies. However, it is particularly concerning that the risky practices and hegemonic ideals described above were considered by all participants in this research to be the dominant form of masculinity. All participants indicated a rigid belief HM as the gold standard of masculinity, even if they failed to attain some of its standards. Many positioned themselves reflexively (Renold, 2004) away from the dangerous aspects of HM, but were unable to create identities that rejected HM *in toto*. This relates to the implicit belief that masculinity is singular, not multiple, and is related to biological sex. This belief affords these boys few alternative possibilities for being men.

Positioning in relation to these norms was not unproblematic. Most boys showed considerable ambivalence around conforming to hegemonic norms. In response to pressures from TAI and the ever-present risk of contracting HIV through risky sexual practices, boys were forced to adopt contradictory positions in relation to HM; at times conforming, at times not conforming. All boys in this study dealt with this by creating “sanitised” versions

of masculinity which attempted to create an identity which was clearly "real" HM, but rejected the "bad" aspects such as having multiple sexual partners, dominating women, and drinking alcohol. The tensions between these two narratives (the pure hegemonic and the sanitised hegemonic) resulted in the separation of voices through splitting, and the use of separate spaces in which to enact these separate masculine identities.

These findings support conclusions drawn by Wetherell and Edley (1999), who argue against Connell's theoretical stance on conformance and non-conformance to HM.

Wetherell and Edley (1999) argue that boys do not *either* reject or embrace HM, but may sustain parallel versions of masculinity, linked to different contexts. These parallel versions are clearly evident in these narratives.

### *Sanitised Narratives of Masculinity.*

Despite the hope that boys involved in TAI would show some counter-hegemonic versions of masculinity, it emerged clearly that all the boys interviewed positioned themselves within the hegemonic camp. Alternative versions of masculinity, based on clear opposition to HM and the adoption of non-hegemonic norms, were absent. However, all boys reframed HM into a new discourse still based on the acceptance of the hegemonic domination over women and femininity (including less masculine boys), while disavowing practices relating to alcohol use, crime and risky sexual practices. This discourse represented a sanitised version of HM.

These sanitised versions of masculinity are analogous to the versions of manhood found elsewhere (e.g. Benwell, 2003; and Torien & Durrheim, 2001). The findings of these studies

showed how men created identities based on reframing HM into a more politically correct form in response to feminist pressure. The resultant discourse of masculinity had all the characteristics associated with hegemony, but was reframed in order (at least superficially) to appear to be non-hegemonic. A similar process seems to be happening in this study where boys are reframing traditional hegemonic values into discourses that disavow risky sexuality. This allows boys the space to enact HM, while simultaneously attempting to avoid the risks associated with it. Playing soccer was an integral part of sanitised masculinity, as it afforded boys a space to protect their identities as men. In addition, soccer gave these boys a valid excuse not to engage in hegemonic practices: for example, drinking and having sex was argued to hinder soccer performance.

### ***Defensive Splitting and Soccer.***

Underlying the sanitised discourse of masculinity was the need to protect the self from contracting HIV (or at least to provide a psychological defence against acknowledging the risky behaviour). This need, it could be argued, was particularly salient for this sample due to their involvement with TAI, which promotes HIV prevention. HIV risk is linked in these narratives to having girlfriends, being on the streets and drinking alcohol. An example of this is SM1's *Party Boy* narrative of HM. The boys' avoidance of these aspects of masculinity was clear: by viewing these aspects as innate characteristics of men, they were faced with the dilemma of how to remain "real" hegemonic men, while disavowing risky practices. The result in all cases was psychological splitting. Whether the boy was successful or not in avoiding the bad aspects of HM in practice, they showed clear evidence of maintaining parallel versions of masculinity, one version which endorsed HM practices, and one that did not.

This need to rid the self of bad aspects of self is strongly reminiscent of object relations theory, particularly that of Klein (St Clair, 1996). Klein's theory argues that splitting occurs in conditions where strong contradictory feelings threaten to overwhelm consciousness with ambivalence, and are thus psychologically separated. The ambivalence and contradictory beliefs were clearly evident in these interview narratives. Pressure to conform to HM came from two sources. Firstly, boys mentioned that peer pressure was a significant concern for them. Several boys avoided making friends with non-soccer players, who would not understand their non-conformity to HM. The pressure exerted by peers to conform to HM is well documented in the literature. This pressure takes the form of rigid policing of the boundaries of masculinity (Stout, 2006). In South Africa, Walker (2005) has indicated that boys who do not conform are teased, and are called *isithipa* – feminised township boys who do not wear trendy clothes, drink alcohol, and have girlfriends. The teasing of SN for not having girlfriends is a clear example of this: "If you are not well known it's painful because people treat you any how.... Some even ask what are you?" Because he does not conform to hegemonic norms he is interactively positioned as non-gendered; he has not proved his manhood and therefore cannot be a man.

The second source of pressure comes from cultural constructions of what manhood means. Sideris (2005) indicates that in the Zulu culture, being "*isoka*" – a man with many girlfriends – is highly valued. This was clearly evident in the narratives of these boys. On the other hand, boys were pressured by TAI and the very real threat of HIV to not conform to HM and avoid the "bad" aspects of masculinity. These contradictory pressures clearly create fertile ground for splitting. This is clearly indicated in the interview with DM, where the risky, split off aspects of his masculinity can be seen emerging in spaces away from the public eye, thus allowing him to have girlfriends while sustaining a sanitised masculinity.

All boys indicated that soccer played a crucial role in the maintenance of their masculinities. Soccer provided the space in which they were able to be non-conforming to HM, away from peer and cultural pressures that they would face on the streets of their neighbourhoods. Soccer provided the context in which non-hegemonic elements of masculinity may be safely enacted, thus allowing the maintenance of parallel contradictory identities. In this way soccer can be seen as a defence against the bad aspects of HM.

It is almost ironic that soccer features so strongly with these boys as a protection against the bad aspects of HM, because soccer is commonly associated with highly hegemonic versions of masculinity. Men are able to use the prestige that playing soccer affords them to have multiple sexual partners (Lindegger & Maxwell, 2005).

As well as providing a safe space to enact sanitised masculinities, soccer also serves to legitimise the masculinity of the player. Soccer players are considered to be very desirable men (Lindegger & Maxwell, 2005), and players are able to draw on this discourse to bolster their sense of HM identity, even if they are not otherwise seen to drink and have girlfriends. This echoes the research of Connell (1995) who describes how the Australian iron man masculinity, based on sport and performance and heralded as the exemplar of HM, ironically does not subscribe to the drinking and partying he represents. A similar process occurs here, where boys are able to construct an identity based on the discourse around soccer while avoiding the bad aspects. KS for example says: "What can I say, people know that I play soccer and that I can say makes me popular" (KS: 270-272)

It appears that the process of constructing an alternative masculine identity is more complex than simply having alternative narratives available, which is what Renold (2004) has argued

is a necessary condition for non-hegemonic identity construction. None of the boys in the present study were able to generate an alternative masculine identity which was independent of hegemonic norms. There were no examples of the "personalized" version of masculinity, which Swain (2006) argues is masculinity constructed on its own terms, without subscription to social narratives. None of these boys were able to confidently assert an alternative identity without the need to justify their identities in relation to the dominant hegemonic norms. It was a struggle to dis-identify with hegemonic norms, even for those boys who were marginalised by the discourse, and the tension between hegemonic and non-hegemonic norms was related to considerable subjective ambivalence. As mentioned previously, boys held both versions of masculinity in parallel, and did not position themselves permanently in relation to one discourse. Positioning was fluid and variable, as suggested by Wetherell and Edley (1999).

In summary, none of the boys showed evidence of having developed an identity in opposition to HM. This finding indicates that the presence of HM has a profound influence on boys, making the construction of an alternative identity very challenging. This has been found in previous studies, for example Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman (2002). What this finding highlights, is the importance of understanding male subjectivity and the psychological processes underlying gender identity construction, as Seidler (2006) has argued. Seidler (2006) argues against Connell's notion of men inherently benefiting from hegemonic masculinity. Seidler (2006) argues that the subjective experience of men as they negotiate their identities is of profound importance in understanding the process of identity construction. Edley and Wetherell (1997) emphasise men's agency in identity construction – their subjective needs and motives are important in this process. Merely focusing on the political and sociological aspects of masculinity under-emphasises male subjectivity and



reduces identity formation to simply “choosing” a discourse which offers the greatest access to power and privilege.

### *Strategies for Maintaining Masculinities.*

A key feature of the masculinities identified in this study was that they were a struggle to maintain. This finding is not unexpected, given that masculinity is generally understood to be a struggle (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), and because previous studies of alternative masculinities indicated that boys found it difficult to explain or justify non-hegemonic beliefs and behaviour as masculine in the face of the dominant, widely accepted hegemonic norms (Frosh, Phoenix & Pattman, 2002).

This struggle emerges from the subjective ambivalence experienced by boys as they attempt to integrate the pressures from competing masculine narratives in the social realm with their own personal beliefs, needs and identities. There is constant ambiguity and redefinition around what it means to be a man – the multiplicity of meanings leaves boys with very unclear standards against which to measure themselves. In addition, the “gold standard” of masculinity (Connell, 1995) – hegemonic masculinity – was clearly evident in these boys’ narratives, along with the subjective experience of peer pressure to conform to these standards.

In the face of these contradictions and ambiguities, boys are forced to find psychological strategies in order to maintain a stable sense of masculine identity. This has been referred to as the psychological crisis in masculinity (Edley & Wetherell, 1997; Frosh, Phoenix & Pattman, 2002), and is an area of relatively new investigation in masculinity studies.

Boys in the present study used a number of strategies to create and maintain this sense of masculine self that is not based on HM, yet is justifiable as masculine. The most widely used of these was to locate the sanitised masculinities within safe spaces, away from hegemonic influences. As mentioned above, soccer formed the crucial space where these boys could enact anti-HM norms. While this strategy appeared to be relatively successful for some of the boys, it is nevertheless problematic, because it implies that there are other spaces in which these boys *do* subscribe to – or are pressurised to enact – hegemonic norms.

A related strategy is that of psychological splitting. Boys separated their masculine identity into distinct voices. The voices were linked to different contexts or situations (for example soccer) and each voice narrated a different masculinity. The evidence of multiple voices is not surprising, as it has been well documented in the literature, for example Wetherell and Edley (1999). These authors argue that men hold multiple versions of masculinity in parallel. The maintenance of parallel versions of masculinity is highly reminiscent of the theory of dialogical self, and the implications of this will be discussed further below.

### ***Multiple Voices of Masculinity.***

The presence of multiple voices of masculinity in some of the participants was clearly evident in the interviews. This confirms other study findings proposing the multiple nature of masculinity (e.g. Edley & Wetherell, 1997). However, it is not only a case of there being multiple social discourses of masculinity; identity itself is multiple. Boys' gender identities consist of multiple masculinity narratives, and these are not necessarily seamlessly integrated as a unitary sense of self. Rather, the version of masculinity may vary according



to time and context, and may be quite different in these different situations. This finding lends support to the theory of dialogical self (Hermans, Kempen & van Loon, 1992).

For many of the interviewed boys, their multiple voices of masculinity were separated spatially (the example of the space of soccer has been discussed above). Hermans and Kempen (1993) argue that it is through dialoguing voices that people create a sense of self. The advantage of the theory of dialogical self is that it would allow detailed explication of how boys' masculine voices are maintained in parallel or, if they do dialogue these voices, how this is achieved.

Dialoguing multiple voices is challenging for boys, as it provokes in them a sense of conflict and ambivalence about their identities. Many of the boys' narratives were filled with contradictions around certain issues, particularly the issue of sex and girlfriends. This emphasises the subjective struggle that creating a masculine identity poses for boys. An example of dialogue was identified in the interview of DM, where his ambivalence was clearly evident.

There was no other evidence of dialogue occurring between voices in any other interviews, however. This suggests that these voices were successfully maintained separately through splitting, thus requiring no need for dialogue to occur.

These study findings indicate that the dialogical self may be a useful framework for future studies focusing on the subjectivity of masculine identity. This framework may allow a more detailed analysis about how voices are created and maintained and how they interact, rather than a purely descriptive analysis.

### ***Implications of Findings for HIV/AIDS Prevention.***

The implications for HIV/AIDS are clear: boys tend to position themselves alongside dangerous versions of masculinity which may promote risky sexual behaviour. These hegemonic discourses, by their very nature, pose significant health risks for HIV/AIDS (Lindegger & Durrheim, 2002). All of the boys interviewed indicated that they perceived HM to be dominant in society, and often were at pains to justify their deviation from hegemonic norms. This means that, while boys may create and maintain alternative masculine identities, the perceived ubiquity and dominance of hegemonic norms increases the likelihood that they will enact hegemonic behaviour.

It is clear that risky sexual behaviour is common, even among boys with sanitised versions of HM. It appears that the influence of HM and its effects on boys' perceived expectations for their behaviour as men is powerful. The question arises as how to create the sense in boys that HM is less ubiquitous and less desirable than it currently appears. For the TAI boys, it seems that alternative masculinity is associated with teetotalism (avoiding the "bad things"). Such a perception is problematic because boys may believe that HM is the way to live life to the fullest, and they are somehow deprived by not enacting hegemonic norms. In one sense, by distancing themselves from HM they position themselves away from the norm and position themselves as the Other. These boys who do not engage in risky sexual practices also run the risk of being labelled *isithipha* (sissies) (Walker, 2005). Again, however, the protective function of soccer must be emphasised: boys who are successful soccer players are able to use their abstinence to reinforce the prestige afforded them as players, thereby redeeming their HM identities.

As it currently stands, HM is the dominant form of masculinity. For alternative masculinity to be successful, boys will need to find strategies of minimizing its influence on them. As long as HM is perceived as the hallmark of true manhood, boys are less able to create a sense of masculine identity that opposes HM. However, it is important to recognise that a context of poverty places these boys at a huge disadvantage, because often the education and employment they may desire is difficult to acquire, making sex and substance abuse more accessible ways of proving themselves as men.

Sideris (2005) argues that in contexts characterised by unemployment and poverty, thus undermining important means of proving manhood, many men will draw on cultural resources and tradition to define their sense as men. Culture defines appropriate practices and expectations of men, including the notions of patriarchy and *isoka* (multiple sexual partners) in the Zulu context. This was seen in the present study in the narrative of SM1, who defined his masculine identity through identification with tradition and respect for his elders and disavowed the partying and drinking of his peers.

What stands out from this study, however, is how boys grapple with notions of hegemonic and non-hegemonic ways of being men, and how soccer becomes a safe space for the enactment of masculinities that in places oppose HM. This finding illustrates the need for boys and men to have other ways of being masculine, ways that are constructive and offer the possibility of a better life.

#### ***Limitations of the Present Study.***

This study used only a small sample of boys in order to understand the construction of gender identity in boys. As such, the generalisability of the findings is very limited. Only

boys from one particular context were sampled, so comparisons between these and other boys in different contexts is difficult.

A further limitation originates in the translation of the interviews into English from Zulu. Because of this, a certain amount of accuracy or "resolution" was lost, including aspects of speech such as pauses, stutters, hesitations, and so forth, which may indicate other layers of meaning. In addition, the analyser of the interviews was a different person to the interviewer, which meant that certain interpersonal aspects of the interview were lost in the ultimate analysis. Only the interview text itself was used as data, which may have removed certain elements such as transference and contextual factors out of the analysis.

The boys were interviewed in a single context only, and by only one interviewer. Given the multiple and contextually bound nature of masculine identity (Hermans, Kempen & van Loon, 1992), this is likely to elicit only certain voices or narratives from the interviewees. These analyses can not be seen as complete descriptions of explanations of the boys' identities as a result. There was also the problem of interviewer prejudices in certain interviews, where the interviewer clearly favoured certain narratives of masculinity over another, which had clear effects on the presentation of masculinity in these interviews.

### ***Recommendations for Future Research.***

It emerged that soccer plays an important function for identity formation among these boys. Soccer seems to have at least three different functions, based on these interviews. The first was as a defence against the "bad" aspects of HM. The second is as a way of being recognised as a desirable man. The third was as a possible route to success and financial

independence. Future research could take up these issues and examine them in a larger sample of boys, perhaps looking at the difference between boys who play soccer and boys who don't in terms of masculine identity.

There was clear evidence that boys hold multiple versions of masculinity, which seem to be located in different contexts. While this study has identified the presence of different voices of masculinity, described them, and identified instances of dialogue occurring between them, it has not explained how this dialogue occurs and its results. Hermans and Kempen (1993) have developed the framework of the dialogical self that would provide some useful insights into these questions.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this study are clear: boys draw on multiple versions of masculinity in order to construct a sense of masculine identity. In addition, within boys themselves, masculine identity is often multiple. These multiple masculinities are often contradictory, this creating particular challenges with regard to identity formation. The central challenge appears to be creating an identity that keeps boys safe from the risks of HIV, while not being marginalised by peers or the influence of HM. These boys managed this challenge by splitting off aspects of their masculinity and avoiding them as "bad" in order to create a healthier, "sanitised" version of masculinity.

However, the influence of HM in this context is strong, and boys struggle to dis-identify with it. They are forced to escape into safe spaces or draw collective support from soccer-playing peers if they are able to maintain their sanitised masculine identities. Boys experience profound ambivalence about their multiple versions of masculinity making dialoguing these voices difficult. Splitting their differing experiences of masculinity appears to be the most successful strategy many of these boys have to maintain their masculine identities.

Theoretically, these findings indicate that using Hermans, Kempen and van Loon's (1992) theory of dialogical self for understanding masculine identity construction may be useful. The plurality (Edley & Wetherell, 1997) and hierarchical nature (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005) of masculinity have also been clearly illustrated. The findings of the present study underscore the significance of the psychological crises that many boys undergo in constructing a masculinity identity, emphasising Seidler's (2006) notion of the importance

of men's subjectivities in masculinity research. Gender identity, for these boys, was not a simple matter of positioning the self (or being positioned) in relation to various social discourses – rather, the formation of gender identity requires an attempt at psychologically integrating often contradictory values and narratives of manhood, while simultaneously negotiating the difficult terrain of the pressures of various social relationships. While boys may be active in selecting and construction the discourses by which they define themselves (Edley & Wetherell, 1997), it is simplistic to assume that this process is without challenges. Practically, these findings illustrate the pervasive (and dangerous) influence of hegemonic forms of masculinity on identity formation. Non-hegemonic masculinities tend to be subjugated to these dominant discourses, which further exacerbates the challenges involved in maintaining a non-hegemonic identity. The practical implications of this are that the boys are likely to be faced with enormous resistance (from within and without of themselves) to act in non-hegemonic ways. Ambivalence around the norms of having girlfriends and being sexually active were clear among these participants, which indicates that most boys are likely to be exposed to substantial risks as a result of these norms. That these risks are likely to be sexual in nature has profound implications for the spread of HIV.

Finally, soccer has been identified as a crucial element in identity construction for these boys. Soccer has multiple functions, but most importantly it provides a safe space for the enactment of sanitised masculinities.



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